ASUKA COMICS DX

風よ、万里を翔けよ

[かぜよ、ばんりをかけよ]

花木蘭物語



MATSURI AKINO

秋乃茉莉

YOSHIKI TANAKA

原作■田中芳樹

ASUKA COMICS DX

風よ、万里を翔けよ

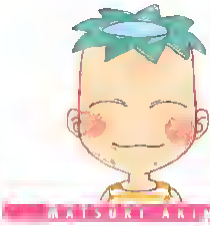
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Akino Matsuri profile



Born on July 7th.*
Raised in Tokyo, but currently living in Yokohama.

**Which happens to be Tanabata the Star Festival, by the way*

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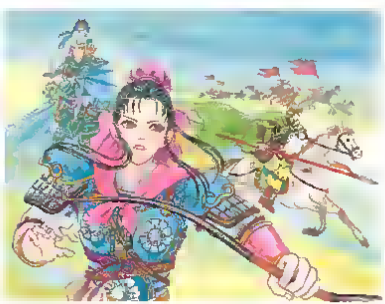
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The Legend of Hua Mulan



The girl Mulan, who donned armor in her aged father's place and came to serve in the Sui Dynasty's expedition to Goo Ju Li.* However, due to a revolt caused by Imperial corruption, there came an event which would greatly change the course of her fate! A magnificent Chinese special romance.

* The name for Korea, at the time

Kaze yo, Banri wo Kake yo

List of Japanese vs Chinese names

*** page #: Japanese pronunciation; Chinese pronunciation; notes (if any)**

Locations

5 Waiga (Wai River) Huai He (Huai river)
5 Shoungun (Shoun County) Zhongli Jun (Zhongli County)
9 Koukun, Gao Ju Li, name at the time for the Korean region
13 (map) Heiyou, Pingrang, in modern English Pyongyang
13 (map) Rakuyou (Touto) Luoyang (Dong Du) Dong Du/Touto literally – "eastern capital"
13 (map) Kouto (Nankin) Jiang Du (Nanjing) Kouto/Jiang Du literally "river capital". Nankin/Nanjing = Nanking in common English.
13 (map) Taikou (Chouan) Da Xing (Chang'an)
13 (map) Takugun, Zhuo Jun,
14 Shoku, Shu
21 Daunga (Daun River) Dayun He (Dayun River), literally "great canal"
25 Kessekisan (Kessela Mountain) Jieshi Shan (Jieshi mountain) the character for "Ke/Jie" means by itself a roundtopped stone monument,
26 Gokou Wu Xing,
28 Ryouga (Ryou River) Liao He (Liao River)
28 Ryoutouyou (Ryoutou City) Liaodong Cheng (Liaodong City),
34, Nankaifu Nanhai Fu, (It should have a Korean name too...)

People

5 Ka Mokuran Hua Mulan, (^_^)
10 (footnote) Ranryou (as in "Ranryou-ou) Lanling,
19 Ga Teigyoku, He Tingyu
19 Hakuyou (Teigyoku's style name) Boyang,
19 Shuei (Mokuran's style name) Ziying,
25 (footnote) Sousou Caocao
26 Shinkou, Shen Guang,
26 Soujo (Shinkou's style name) Zongchi,

Other (Dynasties, emperors, etc.)

5 Zui (dynasty) Sui (dynasty)
5 Buntei (Bun emperor) Wen Di (Wen emperor)
5 Kaikou (name of emperor's reign) Kai Huang;
9 Chin, Chen, state conquered by the Sui,
10 (footnote) Nanpokuchou Nanbei Chao literally "(the era of) the northern and southern dynasties"
12, Taigyou (name of emperor's reign) Da Ye
19 Seiryou (Ryou Campaign) Zheng Liao (Liao campaign)
24, Zuisho (Zui book/chronicles) Sui Shu (Sui book/chronicles)
25 Gibu (Gi dynasty's Bu emperor) Wei Wu (Wei dynasty's Wu emperor)

Special thanks to Akitoki for this list and the poem on pg 25! XD



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O Wind, Fly O'er A Thousand Leagues

The Legend of Hua Mulan

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O Wind, Fly O'er A Thousand Leagues

The Legend of Hua Mulan

MATSURI AKINO
秋乃茉莉
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Original work by 田中芳樹



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Interview Tanaka Yoshiki & Akino Matsuri ... 187

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Story 1

THE ERA OF THE FIRST SUI EMPEROR
SPRING OF THE FIFTEENTH YEAR
OF HIS REIGN (A.D. 595)

IN A CERTAIN VILLAGE IN
ZHONGLI COUNTY...ALONG
THE HUAI RIVER, A BABY
GIRL WAS BORN



ON THAT DAY, THE MAGNOLIA
TREE IN THE GARDEN -WHICH
HAD NEVER BEFORE PUT OUT
FLOWERS- BURST INTO BLOOM

ON SEEING IT, THE FATHER
NAMED HIS DAUGHTER
MAGNOLIA -"MULAN"

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* "Mulan" means "magnolia"


Story 1
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Kaze yo, Banri wo Kake yo
("O Wind, Fly O'er A Thousand Leagues")

by Akino Matsuri
Original work by Yoshiki Tanaka

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*1 Military conscription, or the draft

*2 589 AD When the Sui dynasty destroyed the Chen and united the land



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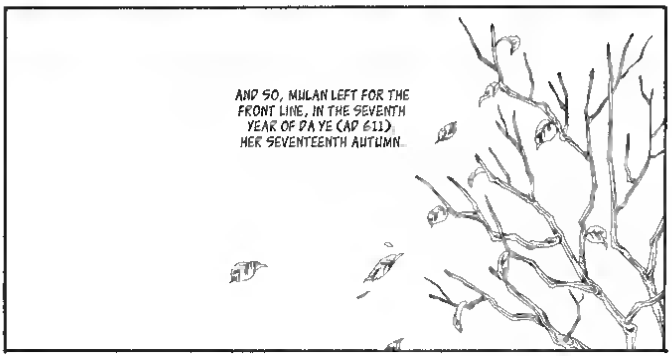


*A general of the Northern Chao Era with a face so fair that he could be mistaken for a woman



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I'VE JUST RETURNED FROM DELIVERING THE NOTICE OF THE CONSCRIPTION OF THE HUA FAMILY'S ELDEST SON TO THE TOWN OFFICE
BU- BUT YOU'RE...
IN ANY CASE...IT'S TOO LATE TO ARGUE


AND SO, MULAN LEFT FOR THE FRONT LINE, IN THE SEVENTH YEAR OF DA YE (AD 611). HER SEVENTEENTH AUTUMN...


NOW THEN, HERE I GO
TO THE NORTH TO GAO JU DI
TO A WORLD I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE THE WORLD OUTSIDE MY VILLAGE!!
DO YOU HEAR ME? TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF ABOVE ALL ELSE
DON'T THINK OF HEAPING UP FEATS OF BRAVERY FOR YOUR RECORD
LIVE ON, BE SAFE, AND COME HOME ALIVE
YES, FATHER... YES, MOTHER I KNOW...
ON FOOT, THE JOURNEY FROM MULAN'S BIRTHPLACE TO ZHUO JAN TOOK FORTY DAYS
Zhuo Jun
Da Xing (Chang'an)
Luoyang (Dong Du)
Jiang Du (Nanjing)
Fingmang (Pyongyang)
THE SOLDIERS, DRAFTED FROM EACH REGION, WERE TO GATHER AT ZHUO JUN


AAH I'M HUNGRY
ALL I'VE HAD SINCE YESTERDAY IS ONE BOWL OF WHEAT GRUEL
WE'VE ALREADY WALKED FOR A HUNDRED DAYS SINCE WE LEFT SHU
STEADY MEN! THERE'LL BE FOOD AND HORSES WHEN WE REACH ZHUO JUN
EVEN THE ONES WHO MANAGED TO ESCAPE CAN'T GO BACK HOME I HEAR THEY'VE FORMED THEIR OWN GROUP OF BANDITS
Touch iron knock on wood..
THOSE ARE THE HEADS OF CAPTURED DESERTERS
IF I RUIN FATHER AND MOTHER WILL BE PUNISHED
HAA
HAA
IF THIS GOES ON NEVER MIND THE LIAO CAMPAIGN I MAY DIE BEFORE I GET TO ZHUO JUN —
WHP

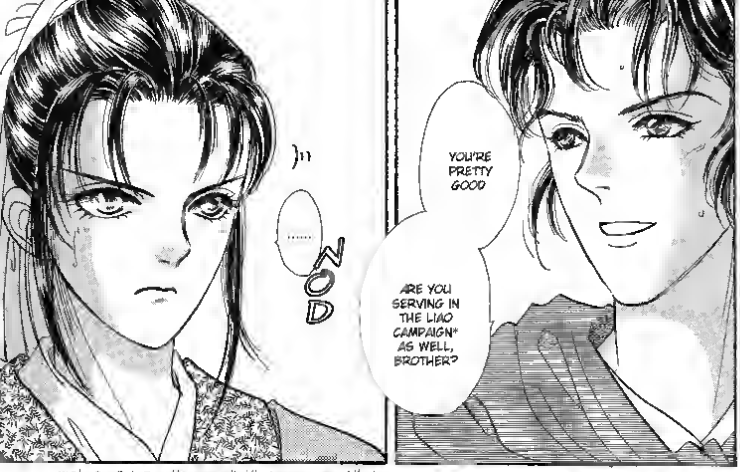

AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY IF IT'S DISCOVERED THAT I AM A WOMAN
I WILL BE BEHEADED ON THE SPOT
SNORE
SNORE
neigh
Pump, pump, pump, pump
BANDITS!!
THOK
AWAAAH!
THWACK



http://www.nightexile.qb.net


I WON'T FORGIVE THAT!!
SHIIIN
TOWARDS!!
YOU BRAT!!
TUMP TUMP TUMP
RUNNING FROM A HARSH BOUT OF MILITARY SERVICE AND ON TOP OF THAT, ATTACKING YOUR INNOCENT FELLOW COUNTRYMEN ...
RE-TREAT!
TCH!
REIN-FORCE-MENTS!?
Aaaaa
Waaaaa
hiwo
!?


HOO HOO
HOO
REAL BATTLES WILL BE MUCH MUCH HARDER
TMP TMP TMP TMP
PHEW
HOO



* The Gao Ju Li Expedition was called the Liao campaign at the time



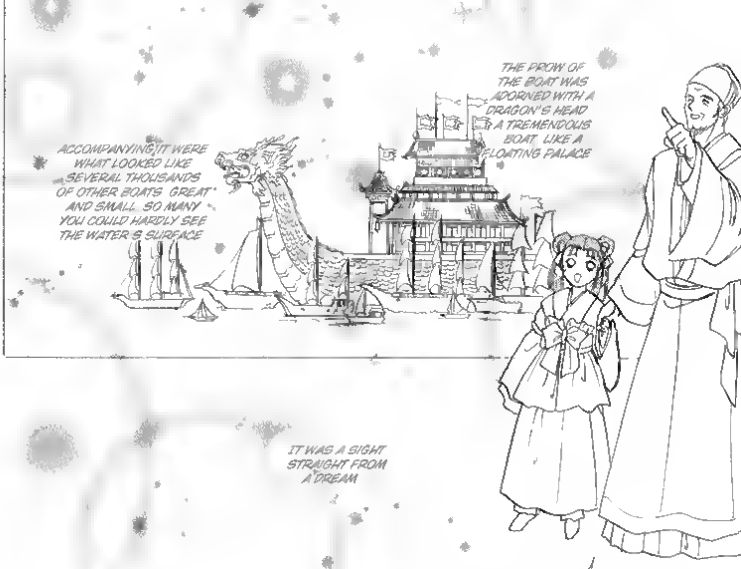
** Chinese names usually consist of a surname and a given name. Adults go by their full name. People usually have a nickname after they reached adulthood. Kind of an alias




THE NEW YEAR - DA YE EIGHT FIRST MONTH
YOUR BRO-THER ?
I WAS THINKING IF HE WERE ALIVE HE'D BE LIKE YOU
LONG AGO, MY LITTLE BROTHER DIED OF THE PLAGUE...
WELL HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A BAD GUY

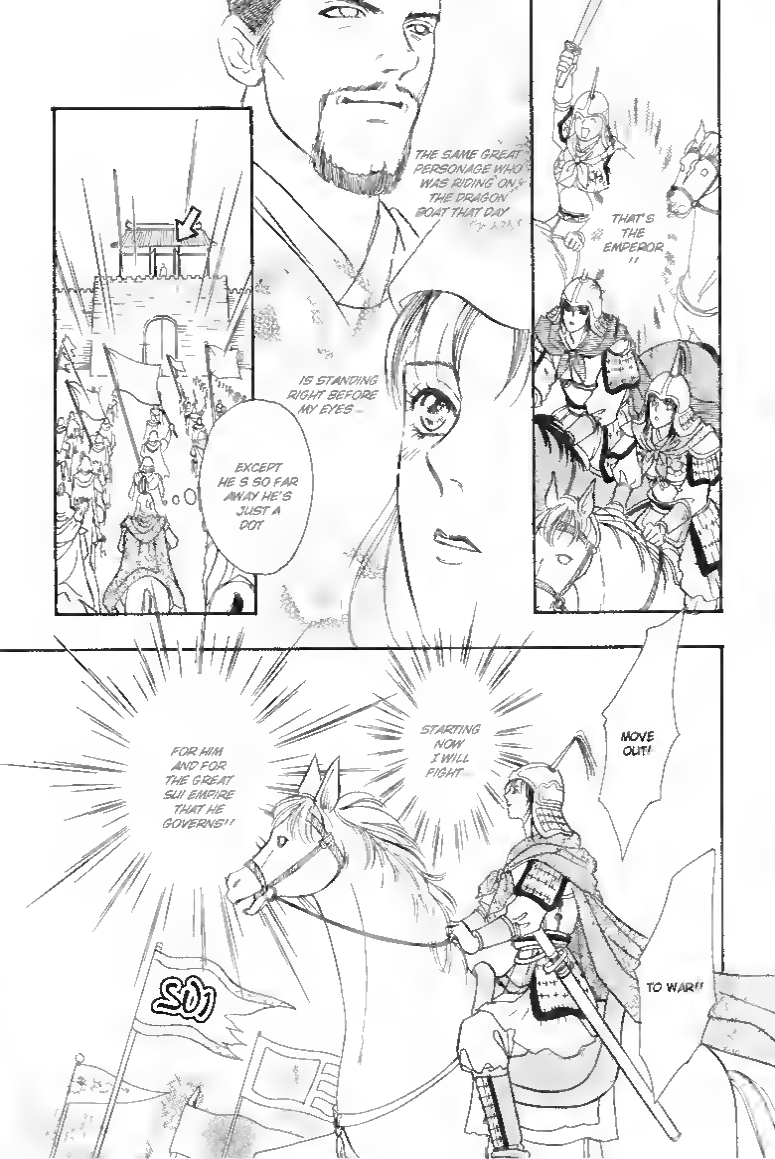


* The act of the emperor traveling around to look over his territories





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THE SAME GREAT PERSONAGE WHO WAS RIDING ON THE DRAGON BOAT THAT DAY
THAT'S THE EMPEROR !!
IS STANDING RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES...
EXCEPT HE'S SO FAR AWAY HE'S JUST A DOT
STARTING NOW I WILL FIGHT
MOVE OUT!
FOR HIM AND FOR THE GREAT SUI EMPIRE THAT HE GOVERNS!!
TO WAR!!
SUI


* Flags and banners
** Ri - Ancient measure of distance
One Ri - Approximately 4 kilometers
"THE STANDARDS * COVERED A THOUSAND Ri ** THE NUMBER OF SOLDIERS BROUGHT OUT HAS NEVER BEEN RIVALED" (CHRONICLES OF THE SUI)
THE MANY COLORFUL ARMORS AND BANNERS MADE THE WASTELAND LOOK AS THOUGH A TREMENDOUS FLOWER BLOOMED THERE
SUI'S TROOPS, HEADING FOR GAO JU LI ADVANCED EVEN FURTHER NORTHEAST
隋
IT'S THE SEA!
THE SEA!!
I'VE NEVER LAID EYES ON IT BEFORE!
WHAT'S A "SEA"?
HOW'S IT DIFFERENT FROM A RIVER?



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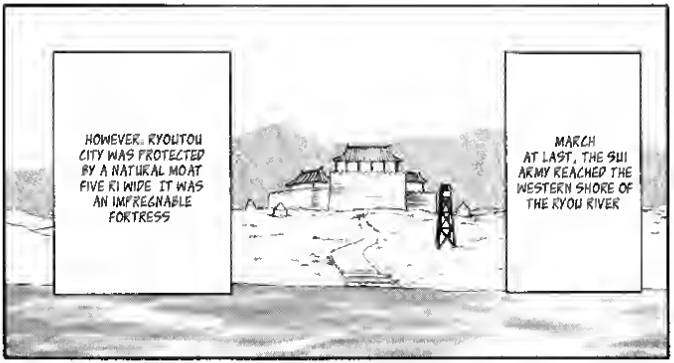


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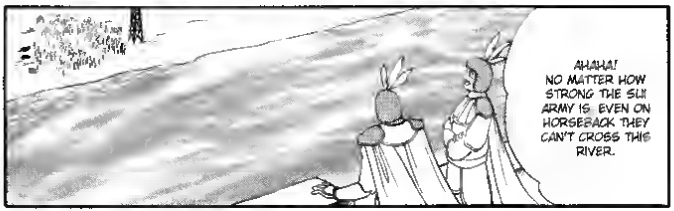
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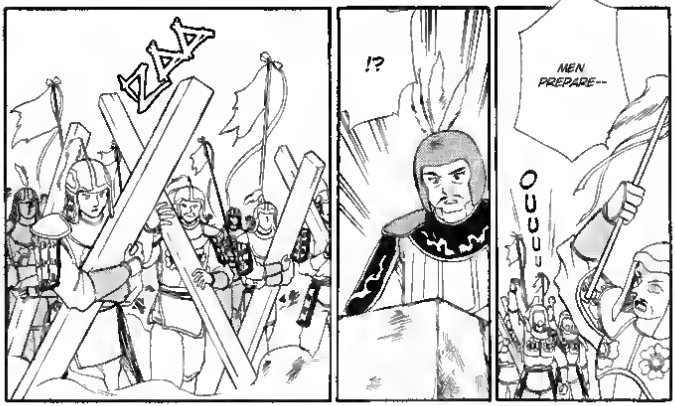


NO
HE COULDN'T
HAVE KNOWN

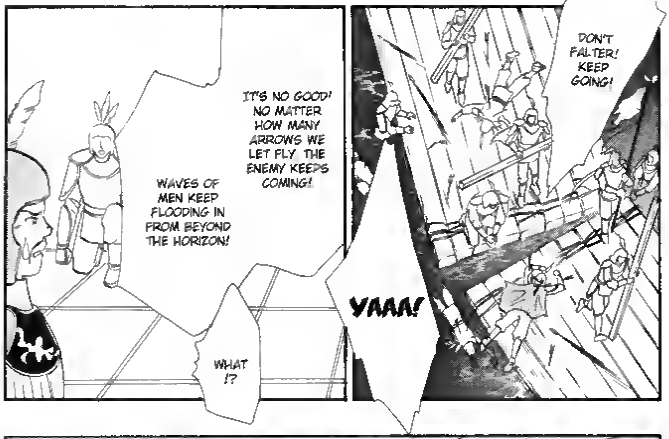


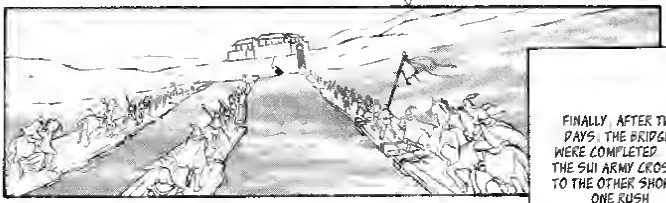
*One Ri = Approximately 4 kilometers






THE SUI ARMY HAD BEGUN TO BUILD THREE HUGE BRIDGES, FITTING TOGETHER BOARDS AND PILLARS PREFABRED TO STANDARD IN ADVANCE
WHAT IN. !?
ARE THEY PLANNING TO BUILD A BRIDGE?
MEN! WE MUST NOT LET THE BRIDGES REACH COMPLETION!
LOOSE THE ARROWS!
FIRE!
WAAAAH!
GYAAAA!
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FINALLY, AFTER TWO DAYS, THE BRIDGES WERE COMPLETED AND THE SUI ARMY CROSSED TO THE OTHER SHORE IN ONE RUSH



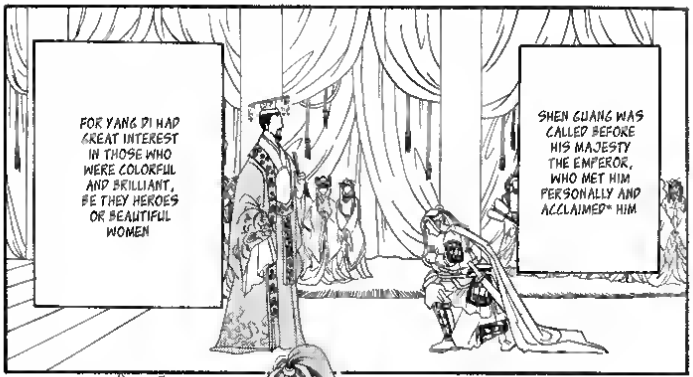
* Ladders used in storming fortress walls

http://www.nightcrawler.cjb.net

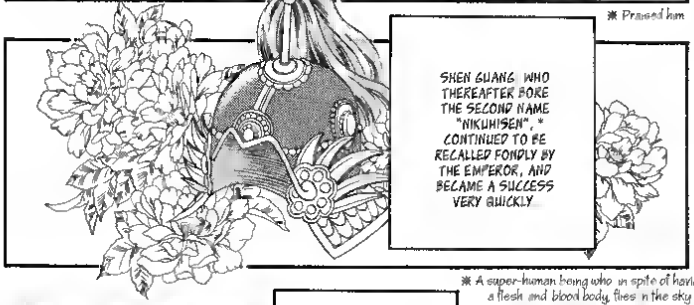



WHOAA!
GRAB
WOOSH
TCH!
THE INSO-LENCE!!
YEAH!
THAT GUY--!!
THERE'S ACTUALLY MORE TO HIM THAN HIS MOUTH, HUH!

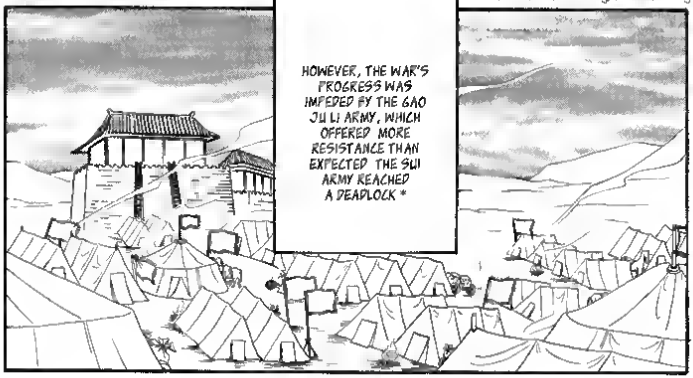

TREMENDOUSLY HONORABLE! A SUPERHUMAN FEAT!



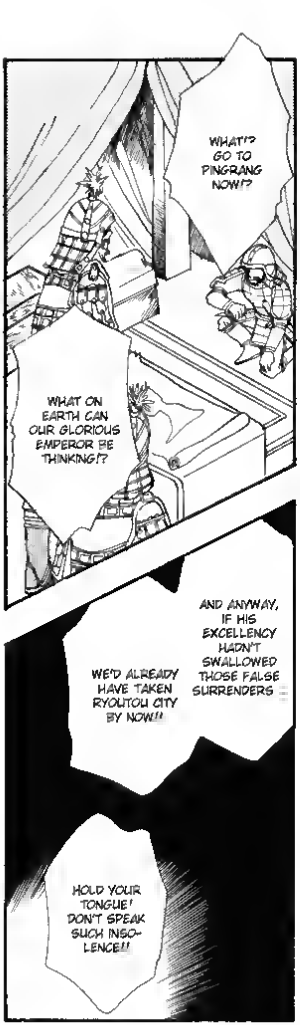
* Praised him

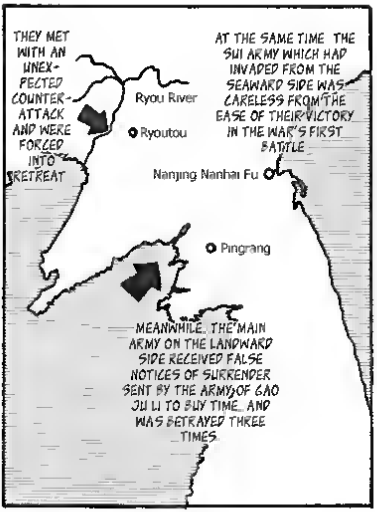


* A super-human being who in spite of having a flesh and blood body, flies in the sky



* The state of being unable to move

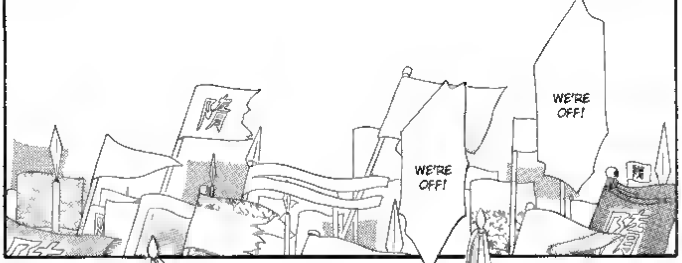

WHAT!? GO TO PINGRANG NOW!?
WHAT ON EARTH CAN OUR GLORIOUS EMPEROR BE THINKING!?
AND ANYWAY, IF HIS EXCELLENCY HADN'T SWALLOWED THOSE FALSE SURRENDERS
WE'D ALREADY HAVE TAKEN RYOUTOU CITY BY NOW!!
HOLD YOUR TONGUE! DON'T SPEAK SUCH INSOLENCE!!


THEY MET WITH AN UNEXPECTED COUNTER-ATTACK AND WERE FORCED INTO RETREAT
Ryou River
Ryoutou
AT THE SAME TIME THE SUI ARMY WHICH HAD INVADED FROM THE SEAWARD SIDE WAS CARELESS FROM THE EASE OF THEIR VICTORY IN THE WAR'S FIRST BATTLE
Nanjing Nanhai Fu
Pingrang
MEANWHILE, THE MAIN ARMY ON THE LANDWARD SIDE RECEIVED FALSE NOTICES OF SURRENDER SENT BY THE ARMY OF GAO JU LI TO BUY TIME. AND WAS BETRAYED THREE TIMES


AS A RESULT THE SUI ARMY ABANDONED THE CAPTURE OF RYOUTO CITY AND CHANGED THEIR STRATEGY TO THE DIRECT ATTACK OF THE CAPITAL PINGRANG. FIVE HUNDRED RI DISTANT


BEFORE LONG THE SOLDIER'S GREW TIRED AND THE PROVISIONS BEGAN TO RUN OUT

#n.ght_exile@irc.irchighway.net









IT WAS ALREADY SUMMER

Note: The 'm iii n's' are the noises that cicada makes which means it's HOT
-SakkaOnna-


PINGRANG
THEY'VE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED US!
WHAT!? THOSE ARE ALL SUI WATCH FIRES!!
RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE
SO NOW THEY SEE REASON AND SEND A DECLARATION OF SURRENDER?!
KEH! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE FALLEN FOR THAT ONE?
MESSENGER FROM THE GAO JU LI ARMY!!
NOW WE MUST STORM THEM FULL FORCE, IN ONE GO!
RIGHT! RIGHT!


※ The w..r ry that all soldiers ra se together at the start o a battle
THEY MAY BE ORDERED TO ATTACK IN A BODY, THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO SOUND THE BATTLE CALL "
ONLY THE WATCH FIRES SHINE BRIGHT AND STRONG OUR SOLDIERS ARE EXHAUSTED FROM STARVATION AND THIS HEAT
I WONDER ABOUT THAT...
ZIYING?!
HA...
WELL WHATEVER HAPPENS, WE CAN'T GO AGAINST THE COMMANDERS' ORDERS
OR-DERS!
ORDERS!
CLIP CLOP
BEGINNING IMMEDIATELY WITH CARE NOT TO BE SPOTTED BY THE ENEMY, THE ARMY IS TO QUICKLY
WITHDRAW!!
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RUMBLE
!?
neigh
SO I CAN FINALLY RETURN TO MY HOMETOWN
WHICHEVER WAY, IT MEANS THE WAR IS OVER.
"WITHDRAW"? DOES THAT MEAN WE WON? OR LOST!?
DUNNO...
KEEP GOING! RETRE-T!!
DO
THE GAO JU LI ARMY, FROM OUR RIGHT FLANK!!
HWAAH
TH- THE COWARDS!!
DO
DO
DO
DO
EVEN THOUGH THEY JUST DECL..RED THEIR SURRENDER!!


LEAVE THE REAR TO ME!
GO, QUICKLY!!
Uwaah
neigh


I'LL BE KILLED!!
SLASH



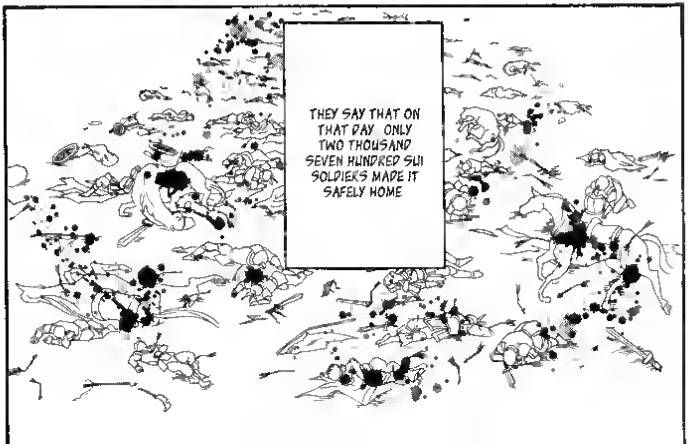
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* A military formation in which soldiers are arranged in a square





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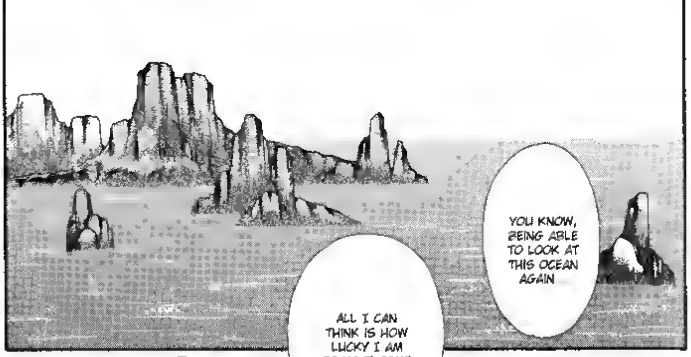




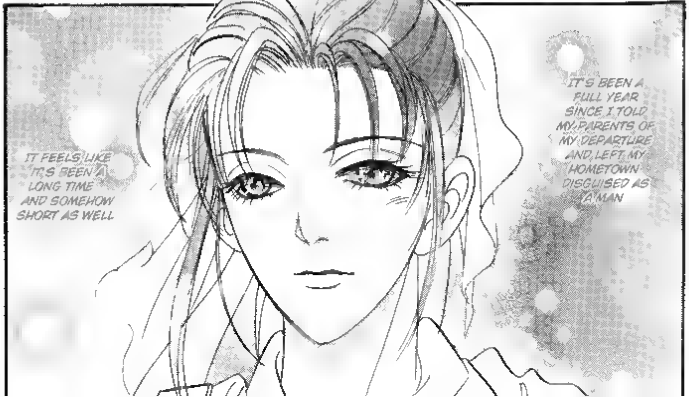
*Note: The Emperor is using the Royal "We" ^^



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Whoooooosh
HOW... CAN THIS TOWN BE THE SAME AS THAT LIVELY, BRILLIANT ONE?!
THERE'S NO POINT IN STAYING HERE FOR LONG
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT WOULD BE BEST TO RETURN HOME QUICKLY
THIS IS ZHUO JUN!?
WELL THEN, ZIYING, FARE THEE WELL
Y...
YES
YOU TWO, OVER THERE!!
Ahem!
YOU ARE HE TINGYU AND HUA MULAN, CORRECT?
YES
BECAUSE OF YOUR COMMENDABLE SERVICE, DISPLAY OF VALOR, AND THE EXPLOITS YOU PERFORMED IN THE EXPEDITION...
UNDER THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE HIGH STEWARD OF JUSTICE THE TWO OF YOU ARE TO BE GRANTED THE RANK OF BUGAROU
AH... THAT OLD GUY?!
"THE HIGH STEWARD OF JUSTICE"?



* A high-ranking officer just below the commanding general of a corps of guards

THE EIGHTH YEAR OF DA YE -
HUA MULAN, AGE 18
HE TINGYU, AGE 20
SHEN GUANG, AGE 22

* A state of confusion and uproar



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Story 1 ■ End

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Scarlet!D

Q.Cer:
syeyey

Special thanks to Akiton!




Night Exile is back!
Er, wait, we weren't really gone... Anyway... just enjoy the releases ^D
(And the ic of "Alex" ^)
http://www.night

Kaze yo, Banri wo Kake yo
("O Wind, Fly O'er A Thousand Leagues")

by Akino Matsuri
Original work by Yoshiki Tanaka

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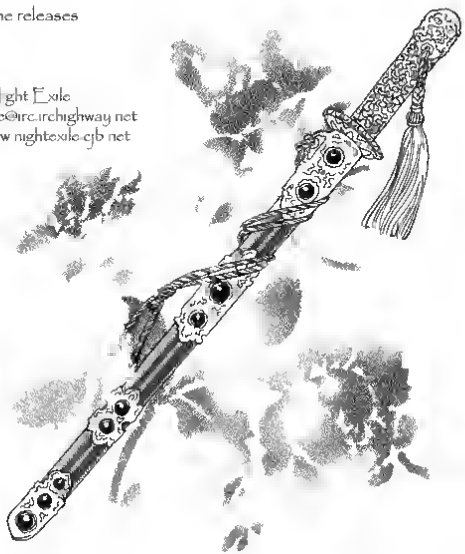
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Story 2


* He's calling them by their nicknames
Bo Yang – He Tingyu, Zi Ying – Hua Mulan – ScarletxD
BO YANG, ZI YING
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU
HE TINGYU, HUA MULAN
BEGINNING TODAY, WE WILL SERVE AS ADJUTANT GENERALS UNDER YOUR EXCELLENCY SESSHOU-ROUSHOU** SHEN GUANG.
THIS CITY IS JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM THE EASTERN CAPITAL, LUOYANG *
SO MANY PEOPLE AND THE BUILDINGS ARE HUGE
THWACK
Glad to be working with you.
Ha ha ha! No no need for formalities here.
THWACK
Sir
* The Sui had two capitals: Luoyang (sometimes "Dong Du") in the east and Chang an (sometimes "Da Xing") in the west
** A high-ranking officer just below the commanding general of a corps of guards ~SakkaOnna



** Apparently, Western lands in the broadest sense could mean anywhere in the area of Persia, As a Moon Syria and Egypt In its narrowest sense it referred to the Tarim Basin (eastern Turkestan). In either case it isn't in China.) -SakkaOnna

* It's not explicitly stated but it's very likely that Shen Guang is referring to enjoying the cherry blossoms coming out not actual flowers or spring. -SakkaOnna


Eh heh heh
Well! ♡
What a strapping soldier you are. You're just my type!
My, my. I see we have a new face with us today.
Eh
I am, huh_?
THAT BO YANG'S WHAT DOES HE THINK HE'S DOING DROOLING LIKE THAT_?
chuckle
EHH?
Oh my! This boy's quite the beautiful young man
twist
Li Ru! You'll spend tonight with me won't you?
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*SFX slurp
Kyaa! ♡ What wonderful drinking form! ♡
Pwaa
Hey Zi Ying! Are you okay!?
Good good have another!
thump
cling
thump
HM?
THE NEXT TABLE OVER IS VERY GLOOMY
IS HE PLANNING TO WRITE POETRY AT HIS DRINKING PARTY?


FWAP
GLARE
Sir, please! You can't do that here.
clink
Ah, heh. Thanks for your business


Golden wind blows
in the beginning of the season,
Jade-like dewdrops hang
in the forest of the night.
This dusk makes one empty
and the heart
feels melancholic
The opportunity comes to men
with a flute, knife or a pen,
One day when the time
and luck is right,
he will create a craft that will
go down in history.
THAT'S QUITE THE DANGEROUS POEM
EH?
AMBITION TUONGO GLOOMY SEEMS TO LEAK FROM BETWEEN THE LINES LIKE A MIASMA
SO HE MEANS TO BOOST HIS OWN NAME
IT MEANS THAT JUST AS FAN KUAI AND XIAO HE LEFT A GREAT IMPACT ON HISTORY, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD BEEN NAMELESS MINOR OFFICIALS.
Come on, let's get back to our drinking.
HUH. HIS FAMILY MAY BE GOOD BUT HE SURE DOESN'T LOOK IT
Master, who was that man just now?
THAT WAS DUKE FA ZHU-SAMA. HE'S FROM AN EXTREMELY GOOD FAMILY.
HIS NICKNAME IS PU SHAN.
DUKE FA ZHU. GIVEN NAME, LI MI.

** Water sign - Appears in the left-hand side of kanji such as "sea" and "tear(drop)" and is related to the kanji for "water". It means that any kid unlucky enough to have this particular symbol in any kanji in his (or possibly her) name would be a candidate. The kanji for "Pu Shan" fits the dream interpretation. -SakkaOnna

ONLY THIS MAN LI MI (PU SHAN) WAS EGOTISTICAL ENOUGH TO BELIEVE HIMSELF THE HERO WHO WOULD OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR.

LONG AGO, THE PREVIOUS EMPEROR, WEN DI, WAS TOLD, THROUGH DREAM INTERPRETATION, THAT ONE BORN TO A LI CLAN AND GIVEN A NAME WITH THE WATER SIGN** IN IT WOULD COMMIT TREASON IN FUTURE. HE BELIEVED THE PREDICTION AND EXECUTED THE CHILDREN OF EVERY NOBLE FAMILY THAT HE COULD THINK OF, SETTING THE WORLD ATREMBLE.

UNLIKE HIS FATHER, WEN DI, HE WAS FAIR OF FORM, HAD AN UNRESTRAINED PERSONALITY, WAS FOND OF HIS LUXURIES, AND LOVED BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THINGS, THE PRESENT EMPEROR, YANG DI, HAD BEEN A SECOND SON, BUT HAD GOTTEN THE THRONE FOR HIMSELF BY PLOTTING AND PUSHING AHEAD OF HIS BROTHERS.

EH!?

AND, IN THE NINTH YEAR OF DA YE (AD 613), FROM HIS SEAT AT THE NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATIONS, HE DECLARED ANOTHER EXPEDITION TO GAO JU LI.*

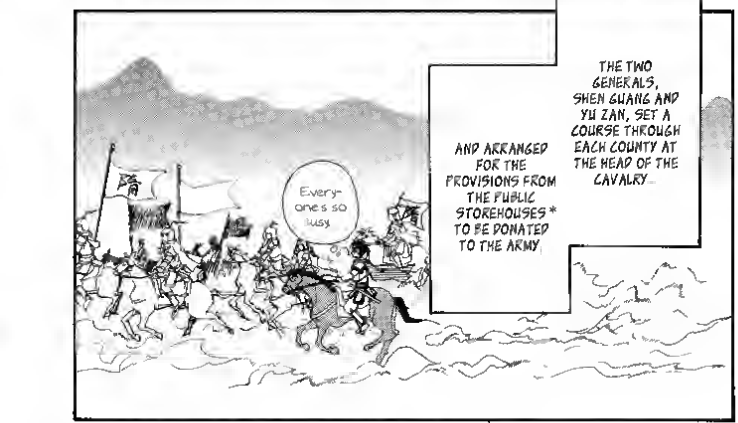
* The name for Korea at the time. -SakkaOnna


COULD YOUR MAJESTY POSSIBLY BRING HIMSELF TO RECONSIDER
IF I MAY BE ALLOWED A WORD YOUR MAJESTY!
I WONDER IF IT MIGHT NOT BE UNBECOMING FOR A POWERFUL COUNTRY TO USE A LONGBOW TO KILL A LITTLE MOUSE (GAO JU LI)
BUT BUT ON THE LAST EXPEDITION 3,000,000 OF OUR 13,000,000 SOLDIERS DIED
THE PEOPLE ARE EXHAUSTED THE ECONOMY STILL IN DISARRAY
mutter
mutter
I HATE BEING LECTURED AT
THE EMPEROR FINDS NO PLEASURE IN THE SCOLDINGS OF THE POPULACE
IN THIS WAY, IN THE THIRD MONTH, THE LABORS OF THE SECOND EXPEDITION BEGAN
AS YOU WISH, YOUR MAJESTY


THE SUI ARMY OF 6,000,000 SET FORTH, RETRACING ITS PREVIOUS COURSE
This time we'll knock Gao Ju Li flat in no time at all!
HOWEVER, WHEN THEIR ATTACK ON GAO JU LI'S SHINJOU HAD DRAGGED ON FOR TWENTY DAYS...
AN EMERGENCY COURIER FROM ZHUO JUN!?
DUKE CHU GUO AND YANG XUAN GAN HAVE STARTED A REBELLION!!
WHAT!?

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* "Public storehouse" A storehouse in control of public property


QI COUNTY.
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL!?
ZHANG XUE TUO. OFFICIAL OF QI COUNTY.
SIR! OUR COUNTY HAS HAD A POOR HARVEST. AND WE HAVE DONATED TO THE MILITARY TIME AND TIME AGAIN ALREADY. THE PEOPLE ARE IN DESPERATE STRAITS
THE PUBLIC STORE-HOUSE IS EMPTY!?
THE PROVISIONS ARE BEING DISTRIBUTED AMONG THE STARVING
ZI YING!?
GENERAL YU, PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT!
YOU FILTHY RAT!! USING YOUR MINUSCULE OFFICIAL STATUS FOR THIS...
OPENING THE PUBLIC STORE-HOUSES WITHOUT THE EMPEROR'S PERMISSION IS A HIGH CRIME!
I'LL RIP OFF THAT UNIFORM OF YOURS RIGHT NOW AND THROW YOU IN PRISON!
WHAT IF YOU WERE TO SEND A MESSENGER TO HIS MAJESTY TO ASK FOR PERMISSION RIGHT NOW?
IF WE SAY THAT THE STORE-HOUSE WAS OPENED AFTER THAT...


NO... HIS MAJESTY IS IN ZHUO JUN AND IT WILL TAKE TEN DAYS TO GET THERE AND BACK AGAIN. EVEN IN THAT PERIOD, TENS OF THOUSANDS WILL STARVE TO DEATH
IF IT IS A CHOICE BETWEEN MY HEAD AND THE LIVES OF THOU-SANDS...
IT IS CLEAR TO ME WHICH IS MORE PRECIOUS
WELL BARKED, DOG!!
grab
I'LL STRIKE YOUR HEAD OFF HERE AND NOW!
HAH-!

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I DO BELIEVE WE HAVE A MAN HERE WORTHY OF THE TITLE "JUNZI" *
Phew
stomp stomp
DAMN IT!
* "Junzi" - A good official who protects his citizens and pours himself into his work
Ah, Uh-oh
THAT OLD MAN MAY FALSIFY THIS INCIDENT IN HIS REPORT TO THE EMPEROR
HURRY
HURRY!!
SO THAT NO MORE BLOOD WILL BE SHED IN VAIN...
GOOD!
MAKE IT SO ZI YING!
YES SIR!
I WILL RIDE WITH ALL SPEED RECEIVE AN AUDIENCE AHEAD OF GENERAL YU'S MESSENGER AND REPORT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER TO HIS MAJESTY
I WILL GO TO ZHUO JUN!


ZHUO JUN
I SEE.
OPENING THE STOREHOUSE WITHOUT THE EXPRESS PERMISSION OF THE EMPEROR IS MOST CERTAINLY ILLEGAL.
AN ORDINARY MAN WOULD MOST LIKELY HAVE WATCHED THOSE THOUSANDS OF STARVING CITIZENS DIE... OUT OF FEAR OF THE PUNISHMENT
THIS ZHANG XUN TUO HAS DONE WELL!
HE'S EXACTLY WHAT A MODEL OFFICIAL SHOULD BE
I WILL BE SURE TO KEEP HIS NAME IN MIND
THE DAY MAY SOON COME WHEN I WILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT TASK, SUITABLE TO HIS RANK AND POSITION, FOR HIM TO CARRY OUT.
YOUR MAJESTY!



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AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS WAR, AFTER YANG XUAN GAN HAD WON A BRILLIANT VICTORY OVER THE LOYALIST ARMY, THOSE CLANS DISSATISFIED WITH YANG DI'S REIGN JOINED FORCES WITH HIM ONE AFTER ANOTHER. BY THE TIME HE ADVANCED TO LUOYANG, HIS ARMY WAS 1,000,000 STRONG.
THE REBEL ARMY WAS CHASED TO THE MIN XIANG AREA, AND YANG XUAN GAN'S CAMP WAS CUT OFF FROM THE REST
HOWEVER, THANKS TO QUICK RETURN OF THE EXPEDITION ARMY, THE TIDE WAS REVERSED
HMM LET'S TAKE HIM ALIVE, THEN
HE'S JUST LIKE A FEROCIOUS TIGER IN HUMAN SHAPE
I KNOW HE'S AN ENEMY, BUT A GENERAL LIKE THAT... IT'S NO WONDER THEY CALL HIM "THE SECOND XIANG YU!"
THAT BLACK ARMOR IS YANG XUAN GAN
TALK ABOUT ONE AGAINST A THOUSAND
SWOOSH
A general held in awe by the people as a symbol of almost supernatural battle prowess


I'M GOING!
HEY! ZI YING!?
AH-
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
MAN HE REALLY DIDN'T HAVE TO
EEH!
HE'S COMING THIS WAY!
FWOOM
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
HAH-


OUT OF MY WAY, BOY!!
MAKE ME!!
CRASH
HE HE'S STRONG!!
FAR BEYOND ANY OF THE ENEMIES I'VE FACED BEFORE
THIS TIME I WILL I DIE!?


CLASH
ZI YING ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
HAH! CHILDREN!
RO YANG!
HA!
HA!
HA!
IF YOU WANT TO AVOID DEATH, YOU'LL LET ME THROUGH
JUST MOVE AWAY

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Translator's Note: Xiang Liang was the nephew of Xiang Yu, and the descendant of the Duke of Chu Guo. - SakkaOnna


*There's only a sentence fragment here; it's almost as though he's complaining to his gods or ancestors -SakkaOnna
CLANG
PREPARE YOUR-SELF!
BROKEN PROM-ISES...
thud
AH HALT!!
FORGET ABOUT TAKING HIM ALIVE WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL THAT WE STILL LIVE
YEAH...
BO YANG ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?



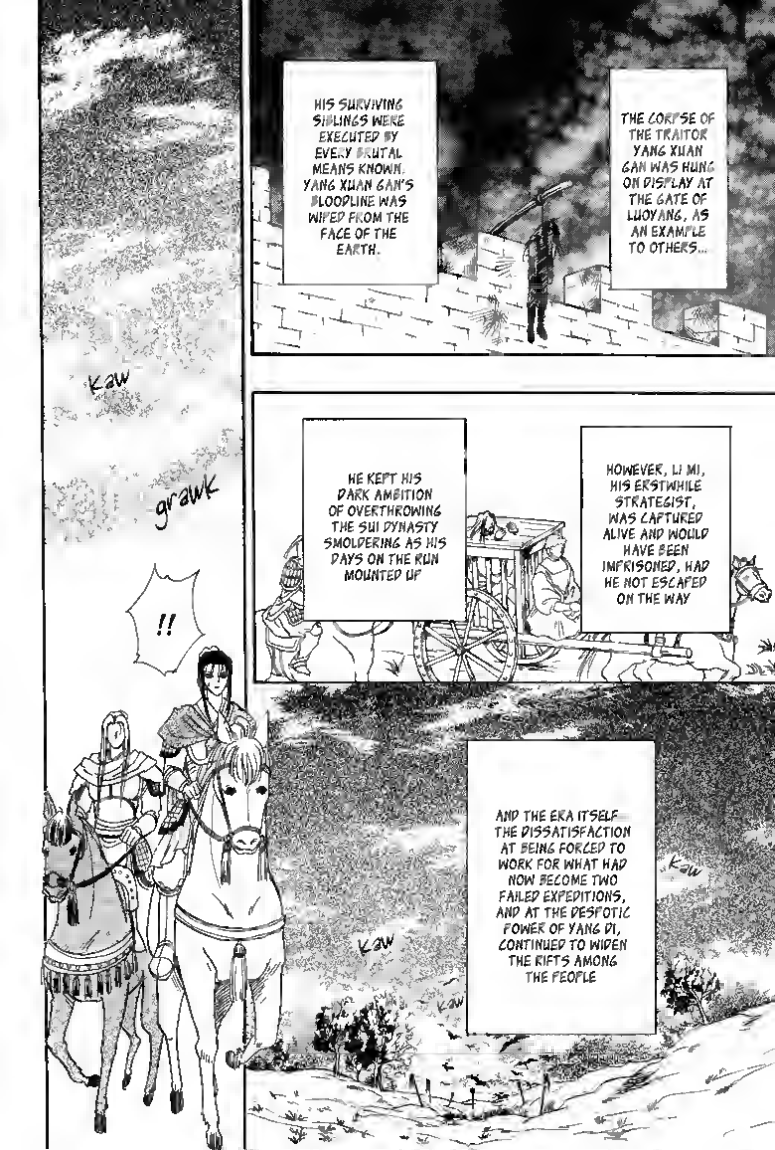
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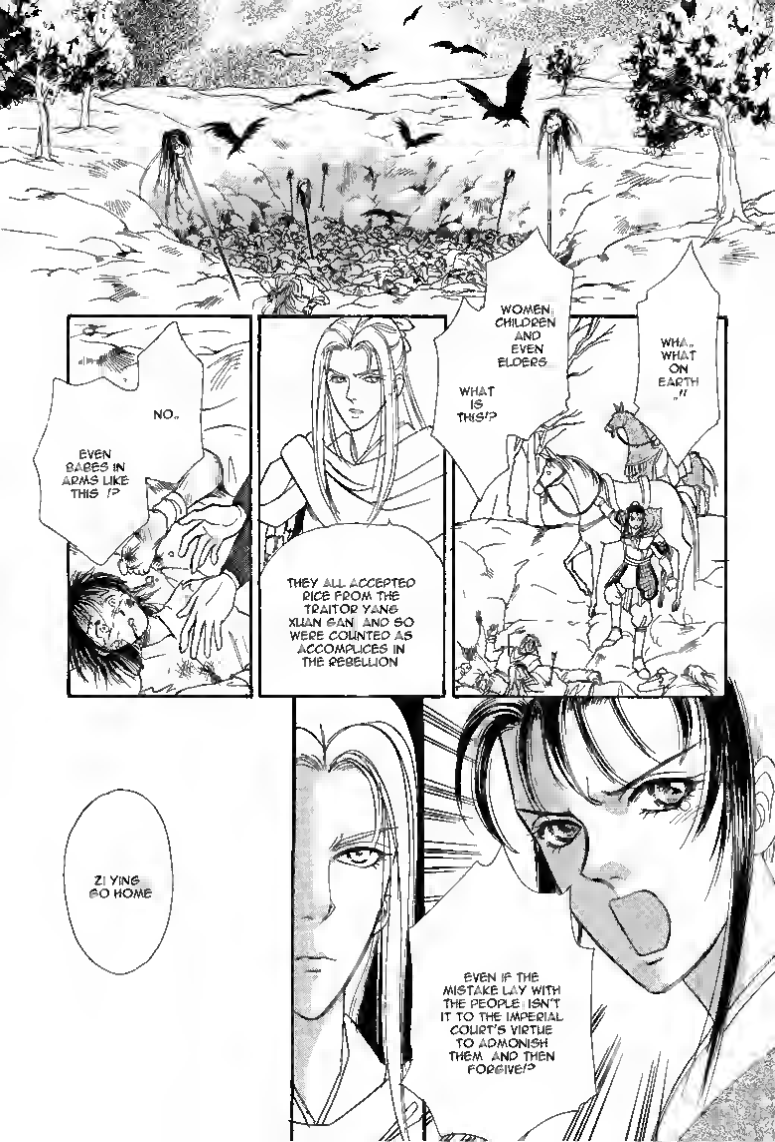


* I assume he means 'bounty hunters' or something similar but it's not specified) -SakkaOnna

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE EIGHT MONTH OF THE NINTH YEAR OF DA YE, THE "YANG XUAN GAN REBELLION" ENDED

IN THE END, YANG XUAN GAN ESCAPED, KILLING HIMSELF BEFORE HIS PURSUERS COULD REACH HIM


HIS SURVIVING SIBLINGS WERE EXECUTED BY EVERY BRUTAL MEANS KNOWN. YANG XUAN GAN'S BLOODLINE WAS WIPED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
THE CORPSE OF THE TRAITOR YANG XUAN GAN WAS HUNG ON DISPLAY AT THE GATE OF LUOYANG, AS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS...
HE KEPT HIS DARK AMBITION OF OVERTHROWING THE SUI DYNASTY SMOLDERING AS HIS DAYS ON THE RUN MOUNTED UP
HOWEVER, LI MI, HIS ERSTWHILE STRATEGIST, WAS CAPTURED ALIVE AND WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED, HAD HE NOT ESCAPED ON THE WAY
AND THE ERA ITSELF THE DISSATISFACTION AT BEING FORCED TO WORK FOR WHAT HAD NOW BECOME TWO FAILED EXPEDITIONS, AND AT THE DESPOTIC POWER OF YANG DI, CONTINUED TO WIDEN THE RIFTS AMONG THE PEOPLE
KAW
GRAWK
!!
KAW
KAW
KAW

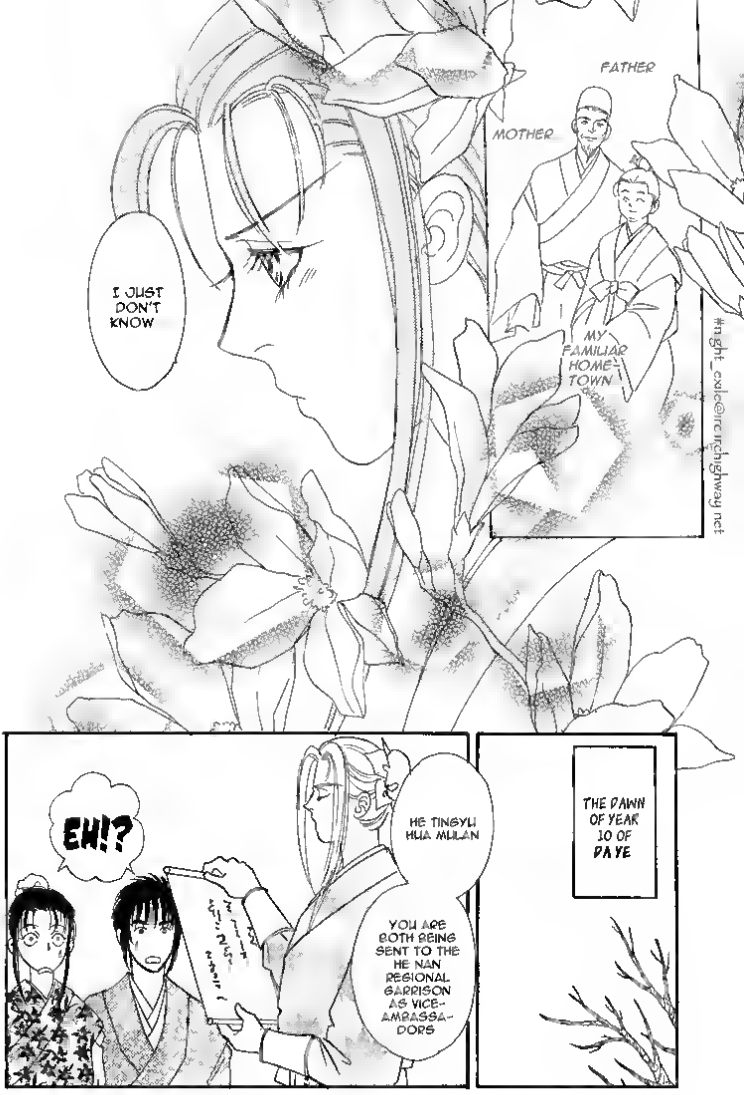

WHA... WHAT ON EARTH ..!!
WOMEN, CHILDREN AND EVEN ELDERS
WHAT IS THIS!?
NO..
EVEN BABES IN ARMS LIKE THIS !?
THEY ALL ACCEPTED RICE FROM THE TRAITOR YANG XUAN GAN AND SO WERE COUNTED AS ACCOMPLICES IN THE REBELLION
ZI YING GO HOME
EVEN IF THE MISTAKE LAY WITH THE PEOPLE: ISN'T IT TO THE IMPERIAL COURT'S VIRTUE TO ADMONISH THEM AND THEN FORGIVE!?

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* The headquarters of the corps of guards closest to the emperor


IT WOULD PROBABLY BE BEST TO AVOID SAYING SUCH THINGS OPENLY
YOU COULD BE HAULED IN FOR CRITICIZING THE EMPEROR AND EXECUTED
NO, I DON'T THINK YOU WERE BUT
WAS I WRONG?
LORD ZONG CHI WAS PROBABLY STRICT WITH YOU IN ORDER TO PROTECT YOU ZI YING
I DON'T KNOW.
SO... ZI YING...
SCHH
DO YOU WANT TO GO HOME?
UM...


I JUST DON'T KNOW
FATHER
MOTHER
MY FAMILIAR HOMETOWN
#night_color@irenehighway.net
THE DAWN OF YEAR 10 OF DAYE
HE TINGYU HUA MULAN
YOU ARE BOTH BEING SENT TO THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON AS VICE-AMBASSADORS
EH!?



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Story 2 / End

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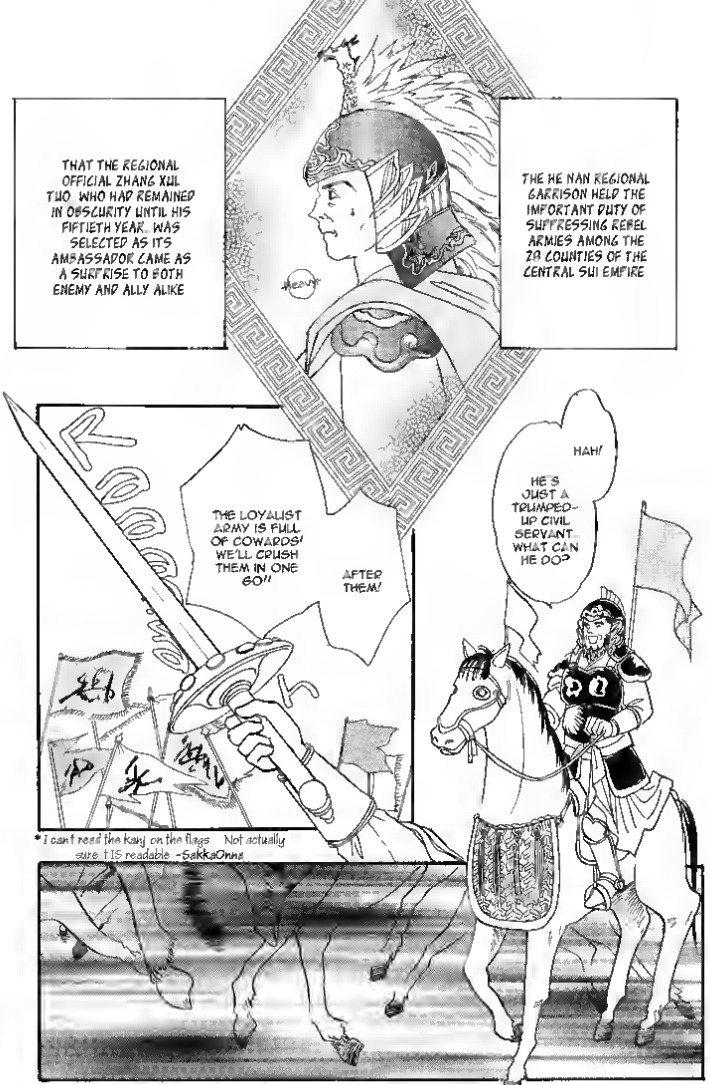

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Story 3


I AM HE TINGYU APPOINTEE TO THE POST OF VICE-AMBASSADOR TO THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON.
HUA MU LAN, THE SAME.
Ambassador to He Nan regional garrison, Zhang Xui Tuo
OH! YOU TWO ARE THE ONES FROM THE STOREHOUSE INCIDENT !!
THANK YOU FOR SAVING ME THEN
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, LORD AMBASSADOR ZHANG?
WE SHOULD BE CONGRATULATING YOU ON YOUR PROMOTION YOUR EXCELLENCY
NO, NO..


I AM NO LONGER YOUNG, AND AM A BIT MUDDLED BY SUCH A SUDDEN AND GRAND APPOINTMENT...
BUT I AM PREPARED TO RISK MY LIFE SO AS NOT TO BETRAY THE HOPES OF HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR
I WOULD BE DELIGHTED IF YOU TWO WOULD ASSIST ME
YES SIR! GLADLY!
THIS MAN IS QIN SHU BAO, A VICE-AMBASSADOR SUCH AS YOURSELVES
Pleasure to meet you.
AND-
I AM LIU SHI XIN!
I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU!
Um... How old are you?
I am fourteen!



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*I can't read the kanji on the flags. Not actually sure if IS readable. -SakkaOnna


KOOOOOO
HAH-
THAT'S
CURSES! A PINCER MOVEMENT?!
KYAAAAAA
YAAAAAAAAA
WE WON, WE WON!
YAAAAY!
WAS THAT IT...?
THE REBEL ARMIES ARE WEAK


HUH?
THE LOYALIST ARMY IS EVEN WEAKER
AFTER SEEING A DISASTER LIKE THAT IT'S NO WONDER THAT THE REBELS HAVE GOTTEN FULL OF THEMSELVES
THIS SUCCESSION OF CONSCRIPTED EXPEDITIONS, ALL ENDING IN FAILURE
WE WILL DO WHAT WE MUST NO MORE, NO LESS
BUT THAT ENDS TODAY AS WELL
AMBASSADOR ZHANG
YESSIR!

AND, MORE THAN ANYTHING, HE LOVED THE CITIZENS AND TREATED HIS SOLDIERS KINDLY. SOLDIERS WERE DRAWN TO ZHANG XUN TUO'S VIRTUE, AND THE BONDS AMONG THEM WERE STRONG.

STRATEGY WAS NOT THE ONLY THING ZHANG XUN TUO EXCELLED IN. HIS PROWESS WITH A SWORD WAS BETTER THAN THAT OF ANY SEASONED WAR VETERAN.

NOT ONLY DID THEIR ACTIVITY REACH THE IMPERIAL COURT, IT THUNDERED THROUGHOUT ALL OF CHINA.

THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH MY EYES. NOW WAS THERE!

LOOK AT THAT!

IN ITS FIRST BATTLE, THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON, WITH A MERE 10,000 SOLDIERS, DEFEATED AN ENEMY ARMY TEN TIMES ITS SIZE, AND IT KEPT WINNING.

TO THE WEST, TO THE EAST, HUA MU LAN SPRINTED ACROSS BATTLEFIELDS.



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IT SKIMMED ALONG... HEADED ANYWHERE IN A THOUSAND LEAGUES
CARRYING THE RUMBLE OF HOOVES, THE CLANG OF SWORD AND SPEAR...
BRINGING WITH IT THE SCENT OF BLOOD
OVER ALL THOSE SIGHTS HUNG THE SOUND OF THE WIND...


TIME TOO, FLEW AT DAZZLING SPEED
...AND ALMOST THREE YEARS HAD PASSED.


IT'S YOUR FAULT MY FATHER AND BROTHER ARE DEAD!!
DAMN YOU, LOYALIST!
DOG OF THE IMPERIAL COURT!
WHAT!?
MY MOTHER AND EVEN MY LITTLE SISTER STARVED TO DEATH!
slash
AGH!
GRR! SILENCE BANDIT!!
ULL..
!?

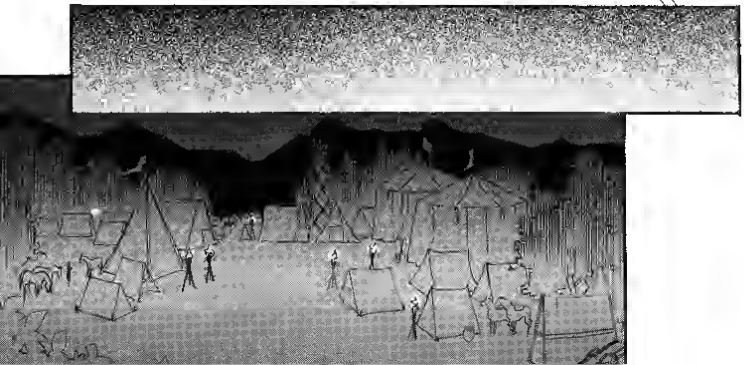

HE'S STILL JUST A CHILD !?
ZI YING!? WHAT'S THE MATTER?!
JUST WHO IS OUR ENEMY?
DON'T THE REBEL ARMIES OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT OUT OF GREED AND SELFISHNESS?
AREN'T THEY VILLAINS WHO GRIND THE PEACE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE UNDER THEIR BOOTS !?
AREN'T WE, THE LOYALIST ARMY THE RIGHTEOUS ONES WHO PUNISH THAT EVIL!?



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REST A BIT
YOU'RE JUST TIRED, THAT'S ALL.




FSSHH


Hah ...!
BA-DUMP!?
WHA-- WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME!?
ZI-ZI YING IS A MAN!!
COULD I POSSIBLY HAVE HAD THOSE SORTS OF LEANINGS!? ME!?
THIS IS AWFUL!!
Lord Bo Yang?


ZHANG XUL TWO'S VALOR ALSO ECHOED OVER THE LAND BY NOW, EVERYONE ACKNOWLEDGED THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON AS THE SUI DYNASTY'S STRONGEST ARMY
AS YANG DI S BAD REPUTATION AND DISSATISFACTION TOWARDS THE IMPERIAL COURT SPREAD THROUGH ALL OF CHINA
BEFORE LONG REBEL ARMIES THROUGHOUT THE LAND BEGAN TO FLOCK TO THE CAUSE OF TAKING ZHANG XUL TWO DOWN
Can't meet Zi Ying's eyes for a while
?
?
clop clop clop
OHP INTERESTING LET'S HEAR IT
General Zhan,
I VE THOUGHT OF A GOOD SCHEME
HE STILL HAD NOT DISCARDED HIS OBSESSION WITH OVERTHROWING THE SUI DYNASTY
DUKE FU SHAN, LI MI WHILE HE HAD BEEN BEATEN IN THE YANG XUAN GAN REBELLION

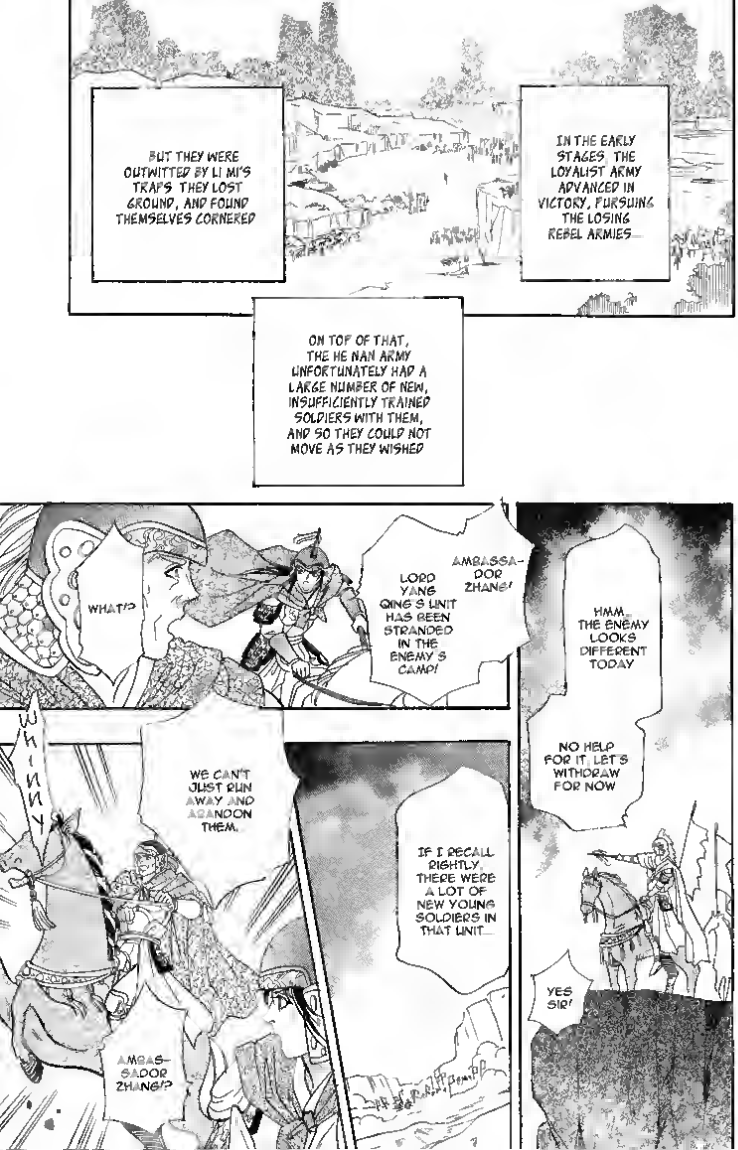
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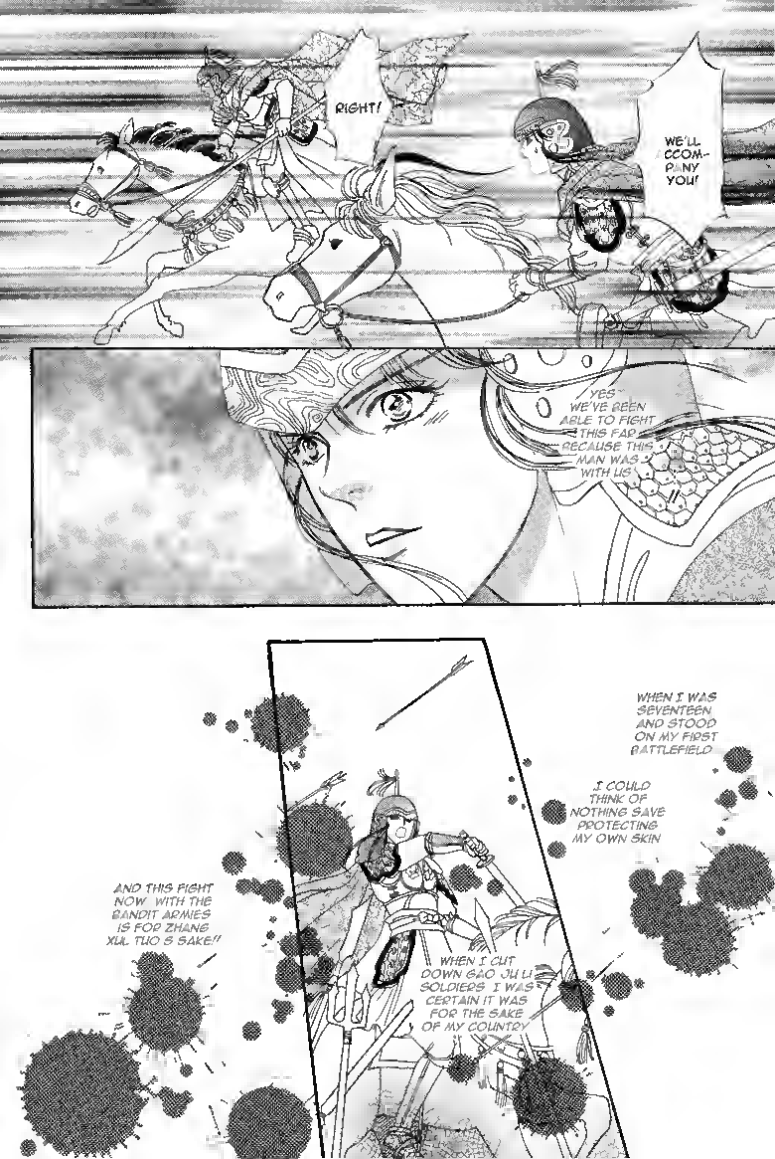


* Banner: Sun-SaikaOnna






IN THE EARLY STAGES, THE LOYALIST ARMY ADVANCED IN VICTORY, PURSUING THE LOSING REBEL ARMIES...
BUT THEY WERE OUTWITTED BY LI MI'S TRAPS. THEY LOST GROUND, AND FOUND THEMSELVES CORNERED
ON TOP OF THAT, THE HE NAN ARMY UNFORTUNATELY HAD A LARGE NUMBER OF NEW, INSUFFICIENTLY TRAINED SOLDIERS WITH THEM, AND SO THEY COULD NOT MOVE AS THEY WISHED
HMM... THE ENEMY LOOKS DIFFERENT TODAY
NO HELP FOR IT. LET'S WITHDRAW FOR NOW
YES SIR!
AMBASSA-DOR ZHANG!
LORD YANG QING'S UNIT HAS BEEN STRANDED IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP!
WHAT!?
IF I RECALL RIGHTLY, THERE WERE A LOT OF NEW YOUNG SOLDIERS IN THAT UNIT...
WE CAN'T JUST RUN AWAY AND ABANDON THEM.
WHINNY
AMBAS-SADOR ZHANG!?


RIGHT!
WE'LL ACCOM-PANY YOU!
YES~ WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO FIGHT THIS FAR BECAUSE THIS MAN WAS WITH US
WHEN I WAS SEVENTEEN AND STOOD ON MY FIRST BATTLEFIELD
I COULD THINK OF NOTHING SAVE PROTECTING MY OWN SKIN
AND THIS FIGHT NOW WITH THE BANDIT ARMIES IS FOR ZHANG XUN TUO'S SAKE!!
WHEN I CUT DOWN GAO JU LI SOLDIERS I WAS CERTAIN IT WAS FOR THE SAKE OF MY COUNTRY


GH!
Crash!
Crack
BUT I DON'T SUPPOSE I'M IN ANY POSITION TO COMPLAIN ABOUT IT
I MAY ACTUALLY DIE TODAY
I'VE SET MY HAND AGAINST WHO KNOWS HOW MANY HUNDREDS [illegible] THOUSANDS OF PEO[illegible] NOW
AND THAT I ALSO KEPT MY TRUE SELF HIDDEN FROM HE TINGYU MY COMRADE TO THE LAST
ONLY IF I HAD ONE REGRET
IT WOULD BE FOR MY AGED PARENTS
AND NEVER EVEN GOT TO APOLOGIZE FOR DECEIVING HIM


THEY'VE CUT DOWN ZHANG XUL TUO!!
AMBASSA-DOR ZHANG HAS FALLEN IN BATTLE..!!
WHA--?!
ALL RIGHT!
YOU..
HAH--!
YOU LIE!!
AMBASSADOR ZHANG CAN'T BE DEAD!!



manga_castle.mangahighway.net


WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO NOW!?
AM-BAS-SADOR ZHANG ...
* A name given to a person after their death in praise of their virtue.
WHAT!?
IS... IS THAT ANY WAY TO TREAT A COMMENDABLE RETAINER WHO GAVE EVERYTHING FOR THE SUI EMPEROR... WHO EVEN LOST HIS LIFE!?
I-I'M JUST THE MESSEN-GER, DON'T-
THE IMPERIAL COURT WON'T EVEN MAKE AN APPEARANCE AT LORD ZHANG XUN TUO'S FUNERAL...
YES, WELL...
AND HE WON'T BE GIVEN AN OFFICIAL RANK OR POSTHUMOUS* NAME...?!!


WHAT IS THE IMPERIAL COURT!?
IS THE EMPEROR A MONSTER WHO LIVES BY SUCKING THE BLOOD OF HIS LOYAL RETAINERS!?
IT'S BECAUSE THE COURT IS LIKE THIS..
THAT WE CAN'T BEAT DOWN THE REBEL ARMIES WHICH FIGHT UNDER THE JUST CAUSE OF SETTING UP A NEW DYNASTY!!
WHA— WHAT BLASPHEMY
ZI YING!?
YOU CUR..!! CRITICISM OF THE IMPERIAL COURT IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH!
!!
WELL, WELL... ...RE WE A "REBEL ARMY" TOO, NOW..!?
SHIK


I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE UNTIL I'VE AVENGED AMBASSADOR ZHANG!
HUA ZI YING, HE BO YANG YOU ARE BOTH ARSOLVED OF YOUR DUTIES AS VICE-AMBASSADORS TO THE HE NAN ARMY. YOU ARE ORDERED TO JOIN THE IMPERIAL PALACE GUARD AT NANKING
Uu-
Ahem
Hem-hem!
HUH...!?
HEY-
COME ON, CALM DOWN ZI YING
AN IMPERIAL ORDER—!?
E- EVEN IF IT'S AN IMPERIAL ORDER!?
mutter
BUT WHY TO NANKING?
BUT IF WE LEAVE HE NAN ANY LESS DEFENDED THAN IT IS NOW, BOTH LUO YANG AND CHANG AN WILL FALL TO THE BANDIT ARMIES
HI... HIS MAJESTY MEANS TO GATHER ALL THE BEST SOLDIERS IN NANKING


ARE YOU SAYING HIS MAJESTY PLANS TO ABANDON BOTH CHANG AN AND LUO YANG AND MOVE THE CAPITAL TO NANKING ?
I CAN'T SAY...
IN ANY CASE WE SUBJECTS HAVE ONLY TO COMPLY WITH HIS MAJESTY'S WILL.
AH- BY THE WAY, YOUR APPOINTMENTS WERE BOTH AT THE REQUEST OF THE GENERAL OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD, HIS EXCELLENCY SHEN GUANG
I'm back again.
LORD ZONG CHI?
ZI YING
IF YOU TURN DOWN THIS APPOINTMENT, IT WILL DISHONOR LORD ZONG CHI
OKAY ?
FINE
LET'S GO TO NANKING
Right!
Right!
* In later years through various twists of fate Qin Shu Bao and Luo Shi Xin became generals of the Tang dynasty


MU LAN AND TINGYU SAID THEIR GOODBYES TO QIN SHU BAO AND THE REST AND SET OUT FOR NANKING.
IT'S REALLY COMING DOWN.
IT'S AS THOUGH EVEN HEAVEN IS CRYING, MOURNING ...MGAS-SACOO ZHONG'S DEATH.
IF IT FEELS BADLY ENOUGH TO CRY IT COULD'VE JUST SAVED HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE
THERE'S NO POINT NOW!
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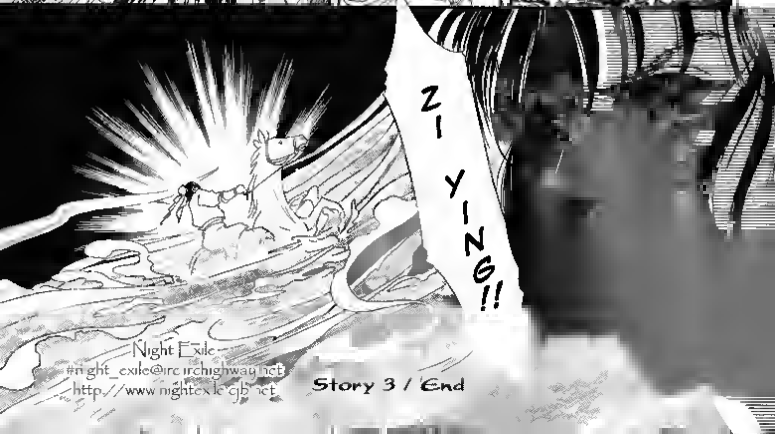


*I'm not sure if it's relevant here but the kanji for the mountain's name is also a word for a pillar which is supposed to hold the sky up so it doesn't fall. If the villagers are extra superstitious and believe the name literally, they might actually be worried about this. ~SakkaOnna


AAH!


THE ROCK IS DAMMING THE FLOW OF THE RIVER!
THE RIVER IS RUNNING BACK!!





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Story 3 / End

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Editors: Siva
QCers: syzyby Ripin

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Kaze yo, Banri wo Kake yo
("O Wind, Fly O'er A Thousand Leagues")

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Original work by Yoshiki Tanaka

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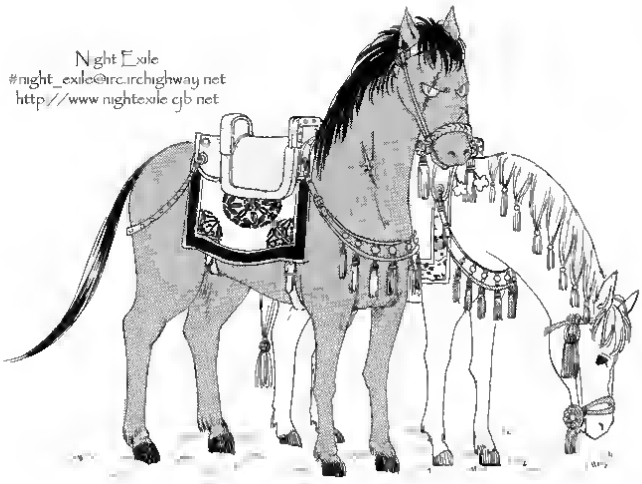
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ZI YING!
choke
ZI YING!
SO YANG, YOU STAY ON THE BANK!
IF WE'RE BOTH WASHED AWAY, THERE WON'T BE ANYONE LEFT TO RALLY THE REMAINING SOLDIERS AND KILL GEOS!!
WSH
WSH


YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT NOW! HOLD ON TIGHT!
A MUDDY STREAM
UNCLE COMBA WITH YANG KUEI-FEI
AND THE BATTLE WHERE WE LOST MEASSADO, ZHANG LIAO
COMBAT WITH DETOER FROM GAO QIU LI
THIS IS NOTHING BUT WATER!!
Hahaha
MY BABY!







knight_exile@incarchighway.net


RRRRRRRR
TIAN ZHU MOUNT. IN...
THE PILLAR MEANT TO SUPPORT THE HEAVENS IS CRUMBLING...
Ahhh...
* Ooh! Called it XD ~ SakkaOnna
WILL THE NATION REALLY MEET ITS END THIS WAY...?



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NANKING
THE HUAN RIVER FLOODED YOU SAY!?
YES... THE VILLAGES IN THE FLOODED AREAS HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES, OR SO THEY SAY...
Ha ha! Don't fret, my empress. Look! See how calmly the Chang River flows.
AH. I KNEW THIS WAS A GOOD PLACE
Your Majesty
IT'S WARM EVEN IN WINTER AND THE WIND IS PLEASANT.
AND JUST LOOK HOW THE "FLOWERS" IN MY GARDEN BLOOM!
YOU'D THINK THEY WERE COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER
OH MY! YOUR MAJESTY!
Queen Flower, here means the Sakka Onna


ZI YING... MAYBE...
WELL, WELL! THOSE SUIT YOU TWO QUITE NICELY!!
But I'm really not good with flashy stuff like this~~
QUIT WHINING YOU TWO ARE IN A WAY.
IMPERIAL GUARDSMEN (HIGH-LEVEL OFFICERS IN THE EMPEROR'S PERSONAL GUARD), AFTER ALL
I'M WITH BO YANG I'D RATHER GO SWING MY SWORD IN BATTLE.. THAN SERVE AT THIS POST
IT'S LIKE BEING A DECORATIVE DOLL FOR THE PALACE
SO...
I SUPPOSE IT REALLY WAS INTERFERING OF ME TO CALL YOU TO NANKING...


I DON'T LIKE THOSE BROTHERS, YU WEN HUA JI AND YU WEN ZHI JI.
JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO I HEARD THEM SAYING-
AH- NO! I MEAN-
WE'RE INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL THAT YOU THOUGHT OF US, LORD ZONG CHI.
ONLY...
HE WAS THE SORT WHO STAYED STUCK IN A REGIONAL OFFICIAL'S POSITION UNTIL AGE 50
AFTER ALL,
ZHANG XUL TWO WAS NEVER REALLY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MATERIAL, YOU KNOW
BUT THEIR FATHER, DUKE YU WEN, SERVED HIS MAJESTY FOR LONG YEARS, AND AS IT WAS HIS LAST WISH HIS MAJESTY CALLED THEM BOTH BACK TO THE PALACE
IT'S TRUE THAT THOSE TWO WERE ONCE EXILED FROM THE PALACE FOR THEIR ILL MORALS.
EVEN THOUGH BOTH OF THEM ABUSE THEIR POWER AND RANK AND ONLY GOT WHERE THEY ARE NOW BECAUSE OF THEIR PARENTS' FAME!
ISN'T HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR CHOOSING THE WRONG PEOPLE TO TAKE PITY ON?


HIS MAJESTY IS PASSIONATE, OPEN-MINDED AND GENEROUS.
HE ALSO POSSESSES GREAT ARTISTIC SENSITIVITY IN POETRY AND OTHER SUCH PURSUITS.
HE IS LIKE A CHILD, REALLY.
IN EQUAL MEASURE, HE IS CAPRICIOUS AND QUICKLY TIRES OF THINGS.
HE IS EASILY LED BY HIS EMOTIONS.
KNOWS THAT AS WELL AS ANYONE...
I THINK HIS MAJESTY HIMSELF...
NOT ANOTHER WORD!!
ZI YING!
BUT AS THE LEADER OF A COUNTRY ISN'T THAT-

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ZI YING I HAVE A REQUEST TO MAKE OF YOU
WHAT IS IT? AND WHY SO FORMAL...?
DA YE: YEAR 14 (AD 618) MARCH 7TH
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO GAIN AN AUDIENCE WITH HER MAJESTY THE EMPRESS
HUH!?



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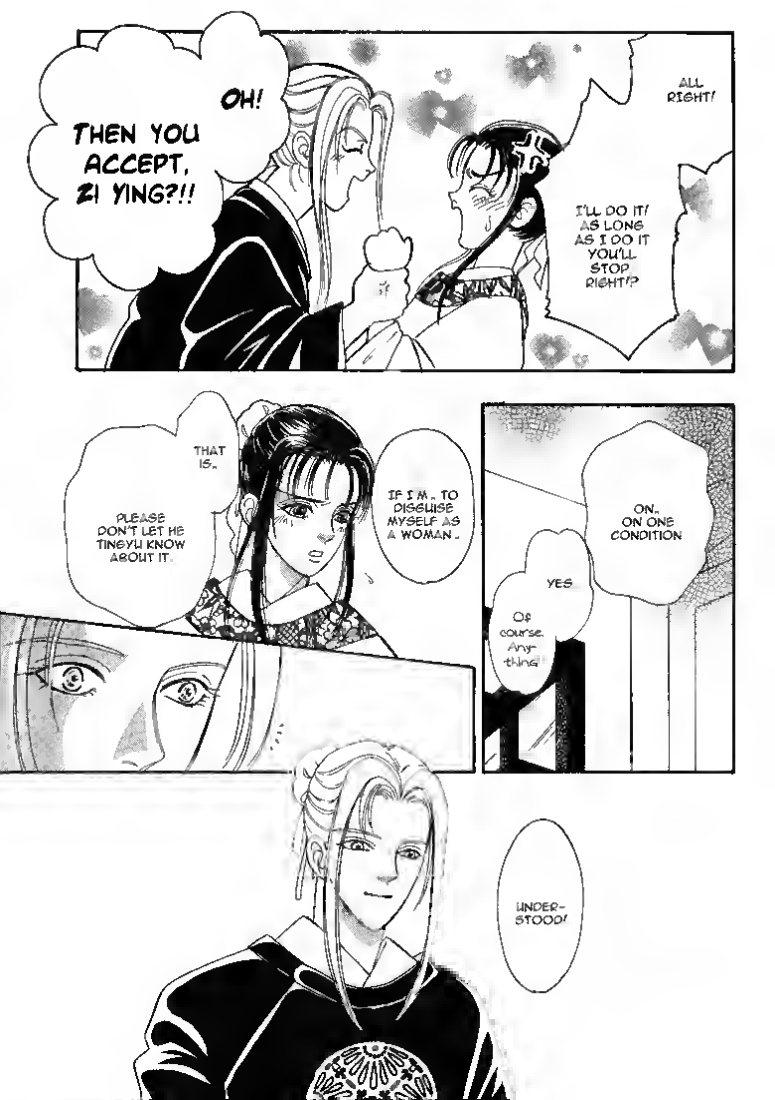

YES
THAT'S TRUE, BUT~
WOMEN MAY ENTER

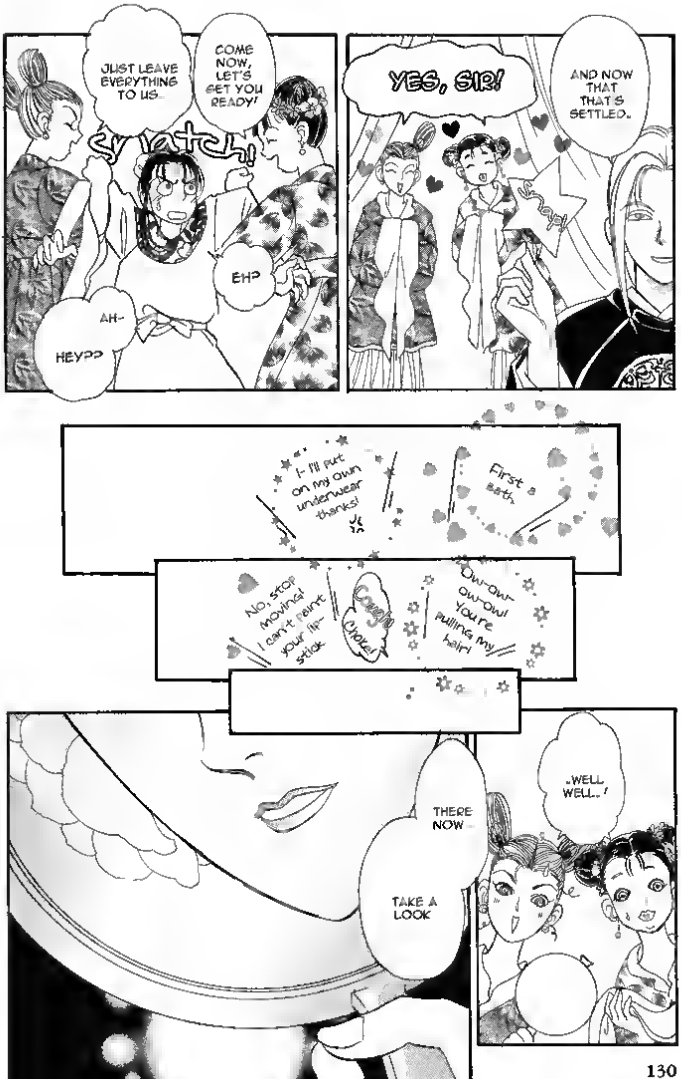

Hahn
I... IMPOSSIBLE
AM I FOUND OUT!?
DOES HE KNOW THAT I~M~ WOMAN!?
YES
ZI YING, YOU
BADUM~
BADUMP

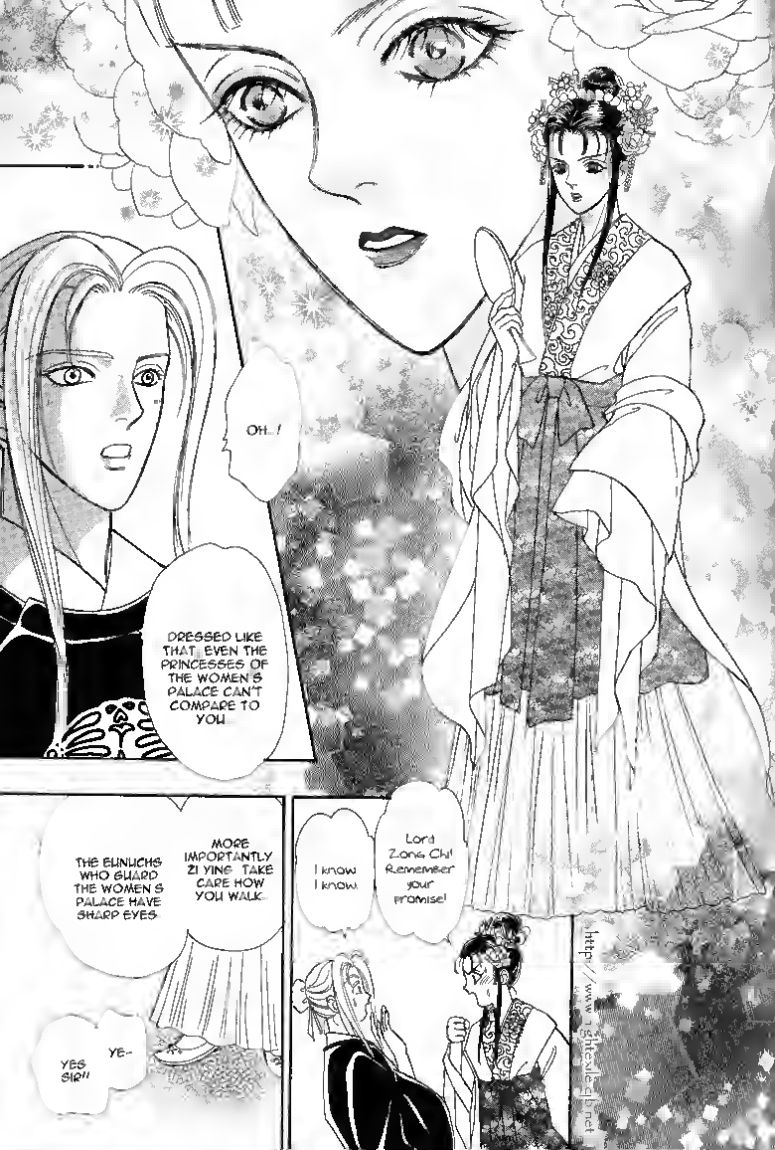

..ARE TO DISGUISE YOURSELF AS A WOMAN AND INFILTRATE THE WOMEN'S PALACE!!
CROSS-DRESS--!?
SO SO I'M NOT FOUND OUT THEN
N-NO..
SHIT.. THAT'S A PROBLEM!
I-I REFUSE!!
OF COURSE I WON'T!!
TELLING AN UP AN UPRIGHT YOUNG MAN TO DRESS AS A GIRL AND SNEAK INTO THE WOMEN'S PALACE IS AN INSULT OF THE WORST DEGREE!!
MAKING A SUICIDE RUN INTO THE MIDST OF A GREAT ARMY BY ONESELF WOULD BE FAR BETTER!
YOU WON'T? I WAS AFRAID OF THAT.

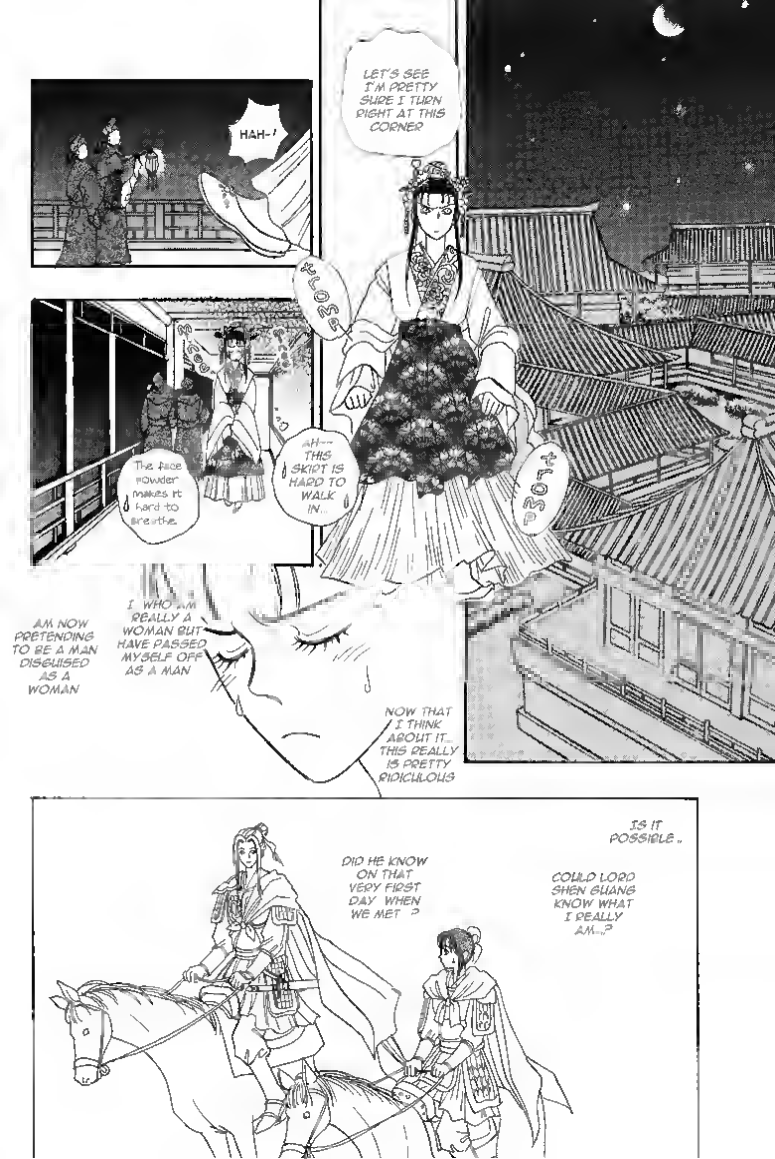


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ALL RIGHT!
I'LL DO IT! AS LONG AS I DO IT YOU'LL STOP RIGHT!?
OH!
THEN YOU ACCEPT, ZI YING?!!
ON.. ON ONE CONDITION
YES
Of course. Anything
IF I M.. TO DISGUISE MYSELF AS A WOMAN..
THAT IS..
PLEASE DON'T LET HE TINGYU KNOW ABOUT IT.
UNDERSTOOD!


JUST LEAVE EVERYTHING TO US..
COME NOW, LET'S GET YOU READY!
EH?
AH-
HEY??
YES, SIR!
AND NOW THAT THAT'S SETTLED..
I- I'll put on my own underwear thanks!
First a bath..
No, stop moving! I can't reach your lip-stick
Owowow! You're pulling my hair!
THERE NOW..
TAKE A LOOK
..WELL WELL..!


OH...!
DRESSED LIKE THAT, EVEN THE PRINCESSES OF THE WOMEN'S PALACE CAN'T COMPARE TO YOU
Lord Zong Chi! Remember your promise!
I know I know
MORE IMPORTANTLY ZI YING TAKE CARE HOW YOU WALK
THE EUNUCHS WHO GUARD THE WOMEN'S PALACE HAVE SHARP EYES
YE-
YES SIR!!
http://www.shkoolgirl.net


HAH-!
LET'S SEE I'M PRETTY SURE I TURN RIGHT AT THIS CORNER
FLOAT
SWISH
AH--- THIS SKIRT IS HARD TO WALK IN..
The face powder makes it hard to breathe.
I WHO AM REALLY A WOMAN BUT HAVE PASSED MYSELF OFF AS A MAN
AM NOW PRETENDING TO BE A MAN DISGUISED AS A WOMAN
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT.. THIS REALLY IS PRETTY RIDICULOUS
IS IT POSSIBLE..
DID HE KNOW ON THAT VERY FIRST DAY WHEN WE MET ?
COULD LORD SHEN GUANG KNOW WHAT I REALLY AM..?


OR
COMPARED TO THAT HE TINGYU IS
It feels great!
Hey Zi Yin, why don't you try this?
OR COULD HE REALLY KNOW EVERYTHING AND STILL BE KIND ENOUGH TO TREAT ME AS HIS IRREPLACEABLE FRIEND...?
Yes Your Majesty
YOU TWO MAY GO NOW...
HUH-?
HER MAJESTY THE EMPRESS!!
THAT'S HER


AND YOU ARE..?
YOUR MAJESTY, THERE IS SOMETHING OF WHICH I WISH TO INFORM YOU
THERE ARE THOSE IN THE PALACE WHO PLOT REBELLION AGAINST THE EMPEROR
PLEASE EMPRESS, I WOULD ASK THAT YOU PERSUADE THE EMPEROR TO RETURN TO LUO YANG.
YOU, ARE NO MERE LADY-IN-WAITING I TAKE IT?
ALL THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND WISH FOR THE EMPEROR'S RETURN!!
NO ONE CAN SAVE IT NOW
THE FATE OF THE NATION CAN GO NO FURTHER.

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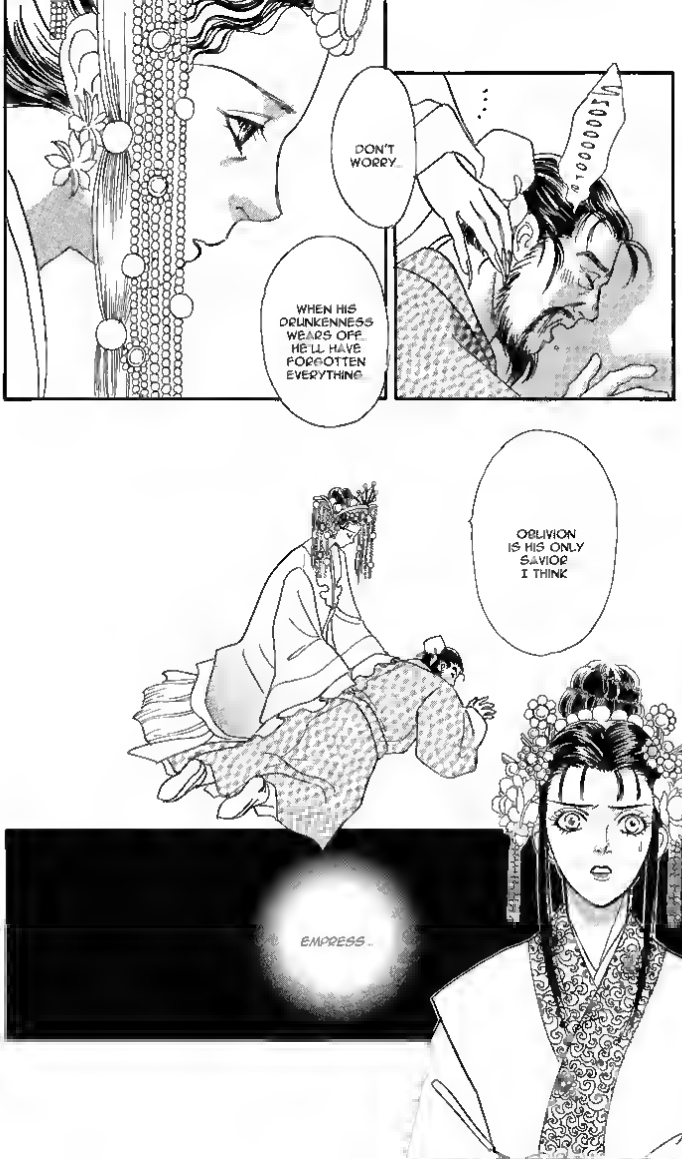



Swish
EMPRESS THERE Y'ARE
Your Majesty ?
I CAN'T MAKE THE RHYMES WORK RIGHT
LOOKS LIKE I'VE RUN CLEAR OUT OF POETIC SKILL, TOO
rustle
A thousand years of glory
A single night's dream
"THIS PERSON IS HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR "
UHN?


THIS IS THE MAN I SAW ON THE GOLDEN DRAGON BOAT WHEN I WAS A CHILD...?
THIS IS THE MAN WHO STOOD ON THE PAVILION AT THE ARMY'S DEPARTURE CEREMONY AT ZHUO JUN THE EMPEROR!?
MM?
YOU.. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
I DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL JUST NOW THAT WE HAD SUCH A BEAUTIFUL FLOWER HERE WHAT A BLUNDER!
HUMPH!
OH! I SEE! TOO SHY TO SPEAK, EH?
CUTE LIL THING..
YOUR MAJESTY.. SHE IS-
LORD ZHANG XUN TUO..
COUNTLESS SOLDIERS..
THIS IS THE MAN THEY HAD TO DIE FOR?!!


YOU SENILE OAF OF A KING!!
Shove
H-
HOW RUDE!!
Grab!
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY!?
Gulp


Whack
Grah?
Whump!
YOUR MAJESTY
AH-
I..
OH NO!! I DON'T BELIEVE THIS... I JUST
I..
KNOCKED OUT THE EMPEROR


DON'T WORRY...
WHEN HIS DRUNKENNESS WEARS OFF... HE'LL HAVE FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING...
...
WAAAAAAAAH
OBLIVION IS HIS ONLY SAVIOR I THINK
EMPRESS...

NOW THEN
YOU HAD BETTER LEAVE THIS PLACE WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE.
YES...
YES MA'AM!
CCD
CCD
#night_exile@nc.archighway.net


HAH-!
YOU! MAID!
WHOSE ROOM ARE YOU FROM?
TAP TAP TAP
AH-
WAIT!
SOME-THING'S WRONG THERE!
TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE WOMEN'S PALACE, IS SHE?
TCH!
WAIT! STOP!
WHAT'S GOING ON!?
AN AS-SASSIN!?
BAN-DITS!?
KYAAAA!



Story 4 / End

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WHO GOES THERE!?
SO YANG !!
One of the ladies-in-waiting has escaped!
That way!
Over there



*Note: "Rosho" is a China-specific term. It was apparently the rank for a group of soldiers whose main duty was to guard palace entrances but who went to battle during wartime and served as mid level commanders. "Rosho" is the generic term. there were several sub classifications although how many depends on the time period. -SakkaOnna


DON'T WORRY
JUST TRUST ME AND FOLLOW
GO YANG YOU..
YOU'RE GOING TO LET SOME WOMAN YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ESCAPE FROM THE WOMEN'S PALACE?
EVEN THOUGH IF YOU'RE FOUND OUT YOU'LL BE PUT TO DEATH...!?
A... ALL RIGHT..
I LEAVE EVERYTHING TO YOU
GOOD! NOW HURRY


halt
OKAY!
YOU CAN GET OUT THROUGH THIS GATE
GO AND TAKE CARE!


UM...
ERM...
DO DO YOU HAVE ANY MONEY?
IF NOT DO YOU WANT A LITTLE TO TAKE WITH YOU!?
YOU BUMPKIN!
YOU COULD VE SAID SOMETHING JUST A LITTLE MORE ROMANTIC
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EH!?
Snap!
KEEP THIS AS PROOF OF OUR PROMISE
I SHALL NEVER FORGET THIS KINDNESS
WE REALLY MUST MEET AGAIN.
EEH--!?
DO TAKE CARE NOT TO LET ANOTHER WOMAN STEAL YOUR HEART.
SHOULD YOU FAIL I FEAR I SHALL HOLD A TERRIBLE GRUDGE
ONE MORE THING. PLEASE KEEP WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE A SECRET.
AH. OF COURSE


AH ZI YING! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT. THEN!?
WELL--
AND ? WHAT NEWS?
HUHN! I WOULDN'T BE SO CARELESS
THERE'S BEEN SOME SORT OF FUSS AT THE WOMEN'S PALACE AND I WAS AFRAID THAT MAYBE
PLEASE DON'T TROUBLE US ANY MORE
THE ONLY THING THAT CAN SAVE HIS MAJESTY IS OBLIVION...
THE FATE OF THE NATION CAN GO NO FURTHER
NO ONE CAN SAVE IT NOW
..AAH..
HER MAJESTY THE EMPRESS -
SAID THAT?

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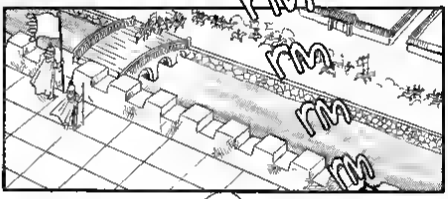



OH, ZI YING!
HAH--!
SAY WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL THIS TIME!?
BO YANG!!
Whew! ~~
EH!?
EEH !?
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER I DON'T WANT TO SMELL LIKE THAT!
EH!?
Pre-emp-tive strike
Bo Yang!! You smell like face powder!
Please keep tonight's secret
HAH--!
AH~ ~~~
UGH ~~~ ~~
DID YOU SNEAK OFF WITH ONE OF THE GIRLS FROM THE WOMEN'S PALACE?
BETTER NOT GET CAUGHT THAT'S A SERIOUS CRIME
N-
NO!
I--


..HA..
HA HA HA!
ALL RIGHT SO YANG
I KNOW.
I'VE NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF IN HEAVEN OR ON EARTH!! *
* My conscience is completely clear
HA HA HA HA!
whap
?
whap
REALLY
YOU REALLY ARE A TERRIFIC GUY.
#night_exile@irc.rchighway.net


OUR FIRST REAL FIGHT IN A LONG TIME! THIS'LL BE FUN!
WHY INDEED ?
WHY ARE WE, THE EMPEROR'S PERSONAL GUARD, SUDDENLY CALLED AWAY...?


NEXT MARCH 8TH
SHEN GUANG'S UNIT DEPARTED FOR THE FRONT WITH ORDERS TO SUBDUE THE BANDIT ARMY OUTSIDE NANKING CASTLE

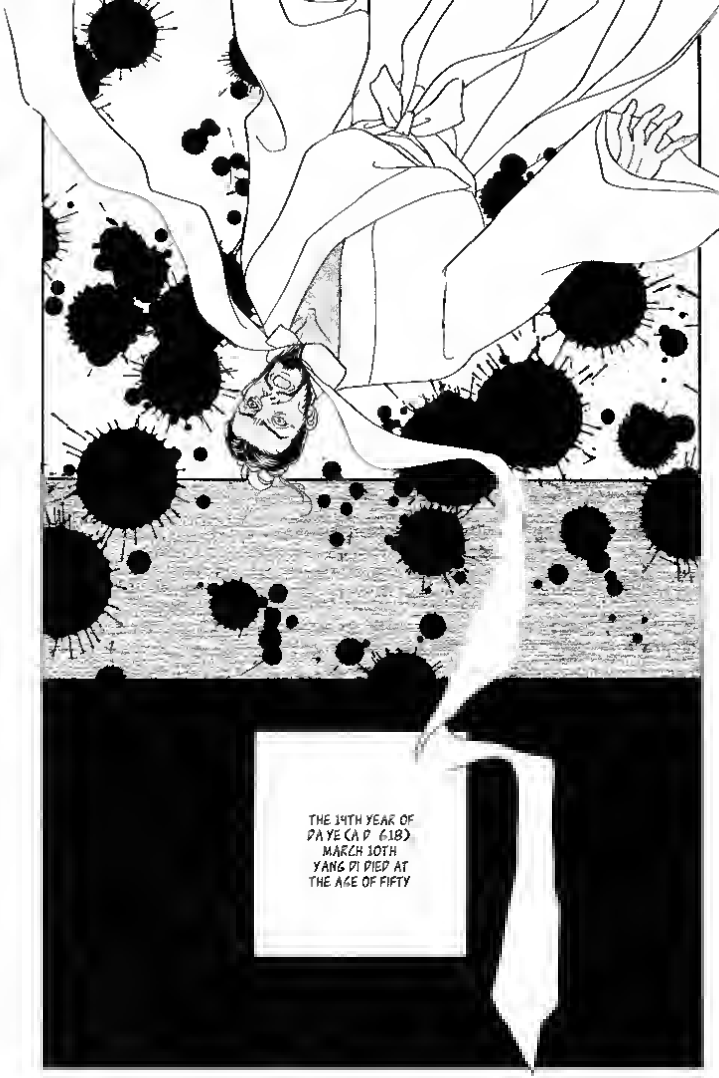



HAVE SHEN GUANG AND HIS MEN GONE?
YES
NOW THERE'S NO ONE LEFT IN THE CASTLE TO GET IN OUR WAY


RIGHT !! WE STRIKE TOMORROW NIGHT!!


SFX Bam
AAAAAK!
WAUGH!
EEEK!
BLIND TY-RANT!
PREPARE TO DIE!!
SWISH
YOU... YOU'RE---
THE YU WEN BROTHERS --!


WA-
WAS THIS PLOT YOUR DOING!?
YOUR, YOUR MAJESTY'S CRIMES ARE GREAT. YOU GAVE NO THOUGHT TO POLITICS AND CONTINUED TO WAGE POINTLESS WARS WHILE YOU INDULGED YOURSELF IN DRINKING PARTIES AND LUST
ON TOP OF THAT, YOU IGNORED THE WARNINGS OF YOUR FAITHFUL SERVANTS AND INSTEAD APPOINTED CROOKED FLATTERERS--
FLATTERERS!?
SI, SILENCE...
BE SILENT!!
KILL HIM!!
HURRY UP AND KILL HIM!
HAH!
YOU SAY THAT!?
AND WHO WAS IT WHO GAVE YOU YOUR REWARD!?
DO YOU CALL YOUR OWN HANDS CLEAN!?

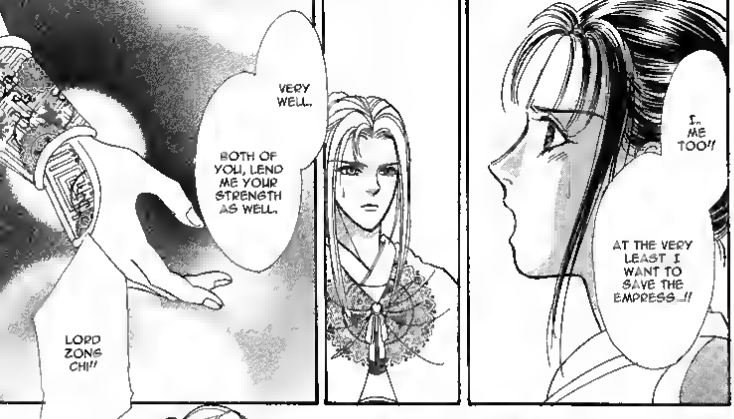

THE 14TH YEAR OF
DA YE (A.D. 618)
MARCH 10TH
YANG DI DIED AT
THE AGE OF FIFTY



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I FEEL AS THOUGH HE WAS WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO KILL HIM
IT'S AS THOUGH HIS MAJESTY HALF INTENDED TO DIE, ISN'T IT?
SHEN, YOU? EXCELLENCY! WHERE SHOULD WE, THE NEGOTIATION ARMY, GO FROM HERE...!?
WITH HIS MAJESTY DEAD, NONE OF YOU ARE OBLIGATED TO SERVE IN THE ARMY ANY MORE
THOSE WHO WISH TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES MAY DO SO
EXCELLENCY SHEN! IF YOU GO TO TAKE REVENGE ON THE YU WEN BROTHERS, I'M WITH YOU!
I TOO!!
I TOO!!
RRAAAH!
I, HOWEVER, CANNOT FORGIVE THE YU WEN BROTHERS!
THOSE CROOKED VASSALS WHO BETRAYED HIS MAJESTY'S KINDNESS!!


THE YU WEN BROTHERS HAVE ABOUT ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SOLDIERS WE HAVE FAR FEWER. OUR CHANCES FOR VICTORY ARE SLIM
LORD ZONG CHI!?
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, TREATING US LIKE OUTSIDERS!!
SO...
ZI YING BO YANG
YOU TWO GO HOME
EH!?
I CANNOT ACCEPT WAGES FROM ANOTHER LORD. NOT ANY MORE
THERE'S NO HELP FOR ME NOW...
I HAVE RECEIVED TOO MANY FAVORS FROM THE SUI EVEN THOUGH I WAS UNWORTHY OF THEM
I'M NOWHERE NEAR THAT CONCEITED...
BESIDES, I DON'T LIKE THE HIGH-HANDEDNESS OF THOSE YU WEN BROTHERS EITHER
I BELIEVE YOU'VE GIVEN MORE TO THE IMPERIAL COURT THAN YOU RECEIVED FROM IT
YOU SHOULDN'T DIE MEANINGLESS DEATHS HERE
BUT YOU TWO ARE DIFFERENT...





IN THE END, OLD VASSAL MAI MENG CAI AND EIGHT HUNDRED SOLDIERS CHOSE TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE SHEN GUANG UNTIL THE LAST.


THAT TEMPLE WAS MUCH FARTHER THAN I'D EXPECTED
SURE WAS. BUT THERE'S STILL TIME BEFORE WE'RE DUE TO DEC**MP.
OOI, LORD ZONG CHI!?
WHERE IS EVERY-BODY!?
AND THE HORSES THEY'RE GONE!?
!?
THE TROOP HEAD-QUARTERS IS PITCH BLACK
NO..!! THEY COULDN'T HAVE--


WHAT A FINE MOON

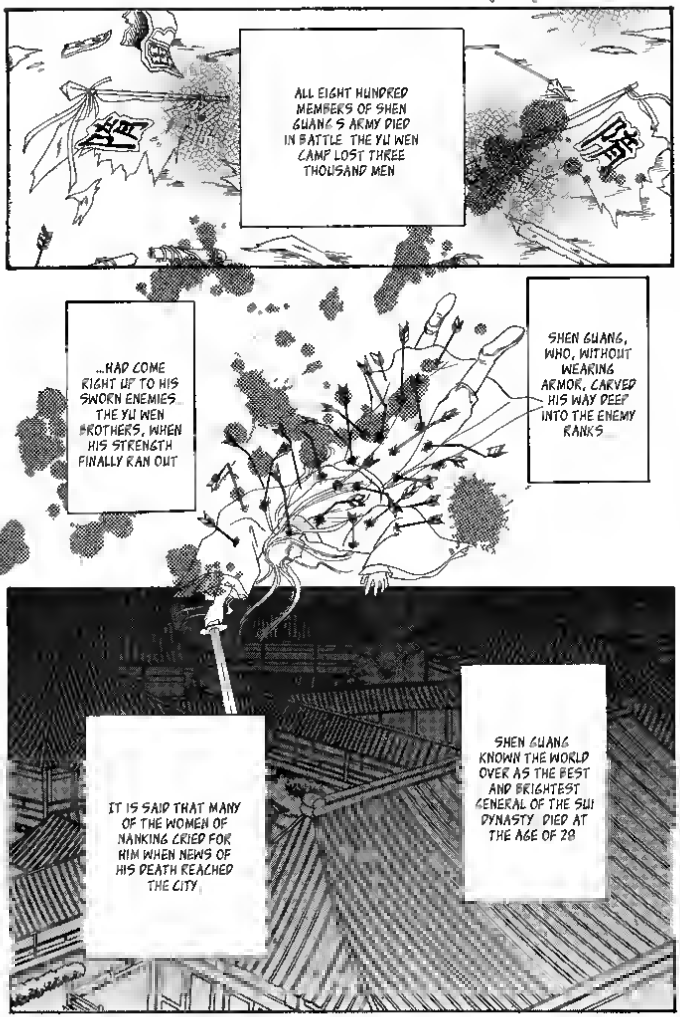

HA HA HA!
I'VE GROWN SICK OF ARMOR
LORD MAL
LORD ZONG CHI WHERE IS YOUR ARMOR?
HAVE YOU THEN.
THOSE TWO HAVE FOUGHT ENOUGH ALREADY
AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR TWO SECOND-IN-COMMANDS? ARE THEY NOT TRAVELING WITH US TONIGHT?
HO...
FROM THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON YOU SAY...!!
NOT ONLY ARE THEY SURVIVORS OF THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON...
THEIR MILITARY EXPLOITS WERE SUCH THAT MINE CANNOT HOPE TO COMPARE.
ZHANG XUN THO WAS A GREAT LOSS

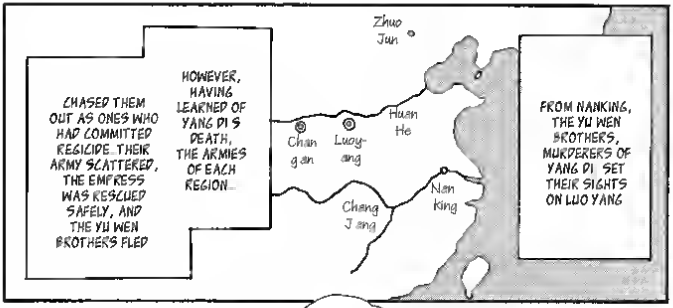
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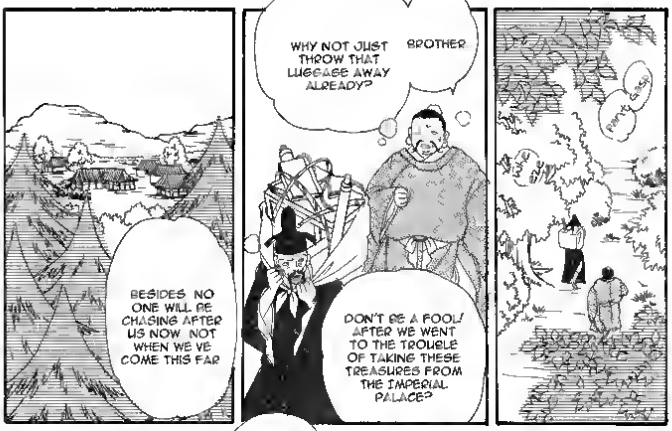


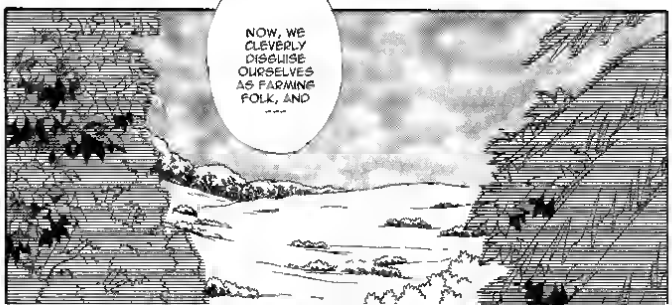


*I REALLY like the last panel on this page! - SakkaOnna


ALL EIGHT HUNDRED MEMBERS OF SHEN GUANG'S ARMY DIED IN BATTLE. THE YU WEN CAMP LOST THREE THOUSAND MEN
...HAD COME RIGHT UP TO HIS SWORN ENEMIES, THE YU WEN BROTHERS, WHEN HIS STRENGTH FINALLY RAN OUT
SHEN GUANG, WHO, WITHOUT WEARING ARMOR, CARVED HIS WAY DEEP INTO THE ENEMY RANKS
IT IS SAID THAT MANY OF THE WOMEN OF NANKING CRIED FOR HIM WHEN NEWS OF HIS DEATH REACHED THE CITY
SHEN GUANG KNOWN THE WORLD OVER AS THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST GENERAL OF THE SUI DYNASTY, DIED AT THE AGE OF 28


CHASED THEM OUT AS ONES WHO HAD COMMITTED REGICIDE. THEIR ARMY SCATTERED, THE EMPRESS WAS RESCUED SAFELY, AND THE YU WEN BROTHERS FLED
HOWEVER, HAVING LEARNED OF YANG DI'S DEATH, THE ARMIES OF EACH REGION...
Zhuo Jun
Chan gan
Luoy- ang
Huan He
Chang Jang
Nan King
FROM NANKING, THE YU WEN BROTHERS, MURDERERS OF YANG DI SET THEIR SIGHTS ON LUO YANG

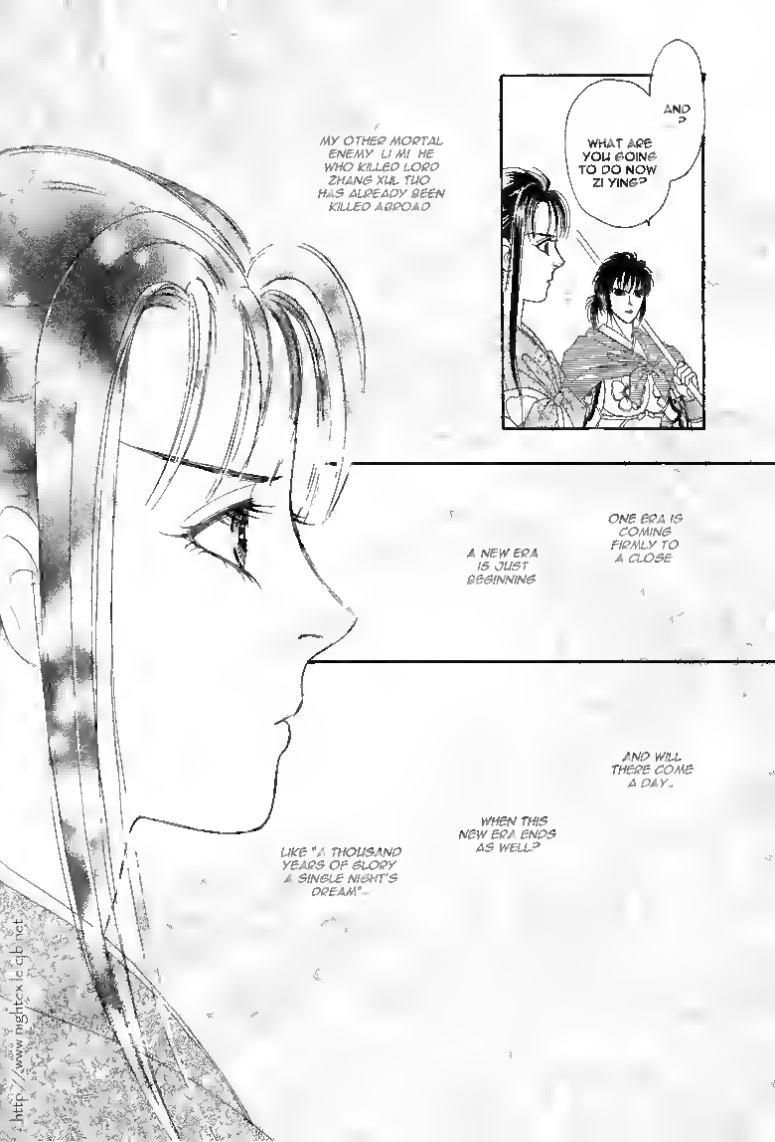

BESIDES NO ONE WILL BE CHASING AFTER US NOW NOT WHEN WE'VE COME THIS FAR
WHY NOT JUST THROW THAT LUGGAGE AWAY ALREADY?
BROTHER
DON'T BE A FOOL! AFTER WE WENT TO THE TROUBLE OF TAKING THESE TREASURES FROM THE IMPERIAL PALACE?
PANTS


NOW, WE CLEVERLY DISGUISE OURSELVES AS FARMING FOLK, AND


I AM HUA MU LAN OF THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON
HALT!
YU WEN HUA JI! YU WEN ZHI JI!
I HAVE COME TO AVENGE THE DEATH OF MY COMRADE, SHEN ZONG CHI!!
!!
EEEK!

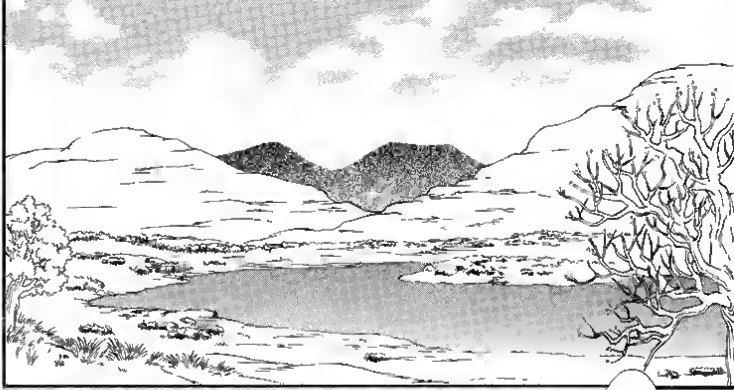

ALSO FROM THE HE NAN REGIONAL GARRISON...
HE TINGYU!
PREPARE YOURSELF!!
ハッ!


OOOOO
..IT'S OVER..
YEAH..



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EVEN IF I GO BACK HOME I DOUBT THERE'S A PLACE FOR ME THERE ANY MORE.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT I'LL DO
MAYBE I'LL MAKE THE ROUNDS OF THE RIVAL CHIEFTAINS' CAMPS BY MYSELF...
IS THAT RIGHT..
THE NEXT TIME I FIGHT, IT WILL BE FOR MY OWN SAKE, AND FOR THE SAKE OF MY FAMILY.
I WILL NEVER FIGHT FOR ANY OTHER DYNASTY, ANYWHERE.
WHY NOT COME BACK TO MY TOWN WITH ME?
EH...?
WO... WOULD THAT BE OKAY? I MEAN, I'M NOBODY...
SURE.
IT WOULD REASSURE ME TO HAVE YOU THERE, DO YANG.




I SEE IT. THE ONE WITH THE WHITE FLOWERS ON IT, RIGHT?
THERE'S MY HOUSE
THAT BIG TREE!

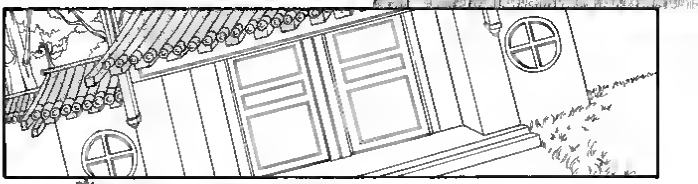

I CAN SEE IT NOW
THAT HILL IS FU SHAN
MY TOWN ISN'T FAR FROM HERE


AH, I SEE. OF COURSE
WE'LL HAVE TO GET READY TO WELCOME OUR GUEST.

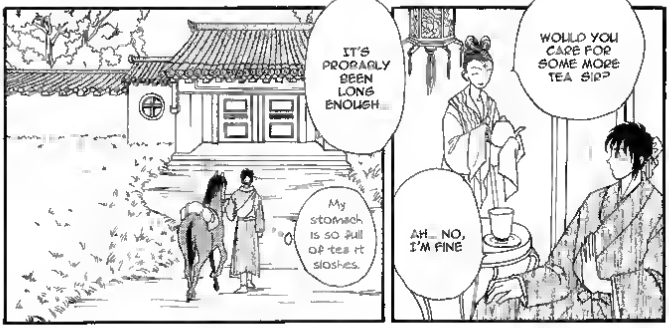

SORRY, BO YANG, WOULD YOU WAIT AT THIS TEAHOUSE FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE?
HM?

#night_exile@irc irchighway net








IT'S PROBABLY BEEN LONG ENOUGH...
My stomach is so full of tea it sloshes.
WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME MORE TEA, SIR?
AH... NO, I'M FINE


HELLO?


AH-
THANK YOU.
PLEASE, GO STRAIGHT ON TO THE COURT-YARD.
MY DAUGHTER HAS TOLD US ABOUT YOU
"DAUGHTER"?
EH?
YOU MUST BE LORD HE TINGYU.
I- I AM.
BUT... UM...



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EH...!?
GO YANG! DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FORGOTTEN YOUR COMRADE OF NINE YEARS!!
SMIRK
THA-THAT VOICE-
YOUR TONE-
..ZI YING ..?


THAT HAIR ORNA-MENT
YOU WERE..
..THAT LADY-IN-WAITING..?


WILL YOU FORGIVE ME?
NO, I'M SORRY I SPENT NINE YEARS DECEIVING YOU..
HOW COULD I HAVE SPENT NINE YEARS WITH A BEAUTY LIKE THIS AND NEVER REALIZED..!!
I JUST ASSUMED I HAD TO BE KINDA-SORTA GAY
I'M THE BIGGEST IDIOT IN THE WORLD!!
AAGH!
MUSS
MUSS
FORGIVE YOU..?
APOLOGIES DON'T SUIT YOU, ZI YING.
ZI YING, HM..
I GUESS I WON'T BE USING THAT NICKNAME ANY MORE
AH. NINE YEARS, OR TEN...
BUT BEFORE THAT, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MY PARENTS.
THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, BO YANG.
IT SEEMS AS THOUGH EVERY-THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THESE NINE YEARS WILL TAKE ANOTHER NINE TO TELL.





THE SECOND YEAR OF WU DE (A.D. 619). THE ERA WAS TURNING TOWARDS THE SPRING OF THE TANG DYNASTY.

Story 5 • End

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*I just realized this a bit ago myself, but "Aki no Matsuri" means "autumn festival" and most Japanese people tend to think of the noun before they recognize it as a name. I'm guessing people try to read it as a name that isn't a pun at first, but since it's (most likely) a pseudonym, which she picked out herself, the pun was probably intentional. - SakkaOnna

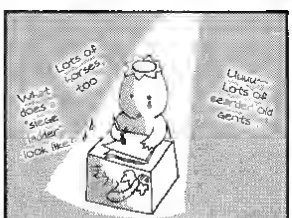
GREETINGS

I'm Akino Matsuri.
"Matsuri", not "Mari".*



To my first-time readers,
it's nice to meet you.
To my usual readers,
it's been a while.

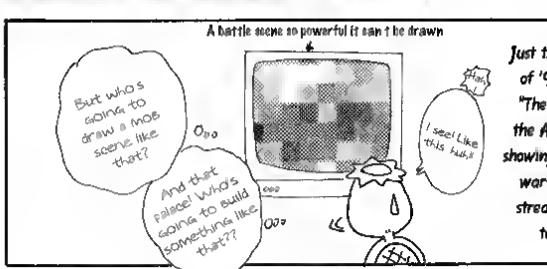
And, to all of Tanaka Yoshiki's fans, I hope I've managed to make you feel even a hundredth of the original book's image, with its grand scale and its lively, appealing characters... It puts me in a heart-pounding panic just to think that, but I drew it with everything I had. Please, read it with warm, generous eyes.





Ancient China was a new world to me, and it was full of action scenes, at which I'm bad (*laughs*).

*Note: Interested lady, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consort_Yang_Yuhuan - SakkaOnna



Just then, in the fall of '98, the movie "The Emperor and the Assassin" began showing, and powerful war-action scenes streamed from the television...

In addition, before that, I'd spent about three years on a series set in America, about people (!?) of no known nationality. I'd just finished that up, and had finally come back home to Japan, so I was pretty jet-lagged.



Come to think of it, in 1998 (in a job with another magazine), right up until that time, I'd been drawing witches and alchemists and young guys in pumpkin pants in Renaissance Italy.

And exactly a year earlier, if I remember rightly, I was in medieval England.

This is "As You Like It". 3 volumes total. Kadokawa is selling it right now. ♡

* WAH! Lorenzo <3 ~ScarletxD

Even when I was drawing "Hua Mu Lan", I stretched my legs as far as Germany during the Second World War and to mysterious uninhabited islands in the Mediterranean, so it really was a worldwide year for me.

Location hunt

Location hunt

* Book title: A Chronology of World History

In the time I'd been away from Japan, the ecology of Japanese high-school students had changed completely; it was like I'd run across some unknown lifeform. I felt like Urashima Taro.*

Why do you have a foreign partner? I can't afford it!

Bleached hair and dark tans... What country are you from again?

Yo, girl!

You're absolutely stark naked!

It's hard to draw clothes with no waistline.

High school girls really should wear sailor uniforms!

Just how long do you plan on wearing those baggy socks?

You can go to any era and any country... And it doesn't cost a thing.

Oh, what fun it is to be a mangaka! ♡

* "Urashima Taro" is the Japanese equivalent of Rip Van Winkle ~SakkaOnna

* Banner on Akine-kappa: Educational guidance

* Kabuki is a 400-year old traditional Japanese drama form (article here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabuki "Super kabuki" is the same drama form only updated (more flashy stage effects, etc.) to attract a more varied, modern audience. -SakkaOnna



Guan Yu who died first came as a ghost to save Liu Bei when she lay on the battlefield seriously wounded. This scene where she's carried off-stage through the air princess style is the climax of the play.

This conversation's going all over the place, but a few days ago, I went to see "The New Annals of the Three Kingdoms" at super kabuki.* That hard-to-believe setting - the Liu Bei Xuan De was actually a woman!! And the weird development of her falling in love with Guan Yu... And why didn't Guan Yu have whiskers? (Guan Yu was famous for having gorgeous whiskers). And why did the "special confidences" happen twice? If I'd started asking questions like those, there'd never have been an end to 'em, but never mind; it was interesting!! Three hours went by, just like that! I laughed heartily, and I cried.

The story is about a girl named Gyokuran (played by Ichikawa Emiya) who dressed as a man and stood on the battlefield, and who, by chance, was saved by Guan Yu and Zhang Fei; with their help, she called herself Liu Bei, and became the emperor of Shu. Since Gyokuran is revealed to be a girl right after their meeting, the love between the two deepens without any odd misunderstandings (?), but actually, the reactions of Xiang Xi (the younger sister of the king of the country of Go, who came for a political marriage) and the of the maids were more unique. Almost a bit lesbian. (*laughs*)

GREETINGS * END

*Note: It doesn't look like these two actors are actually related. Guan Yu's actor is a famous kabuki player and Liu Bei's actor studied under him and uses his last name on stage because he is carrying on his style of acting. No women perform in kabuki, so both these actors are male (even though one's playing a female role). Apparently, in the story she's talking about, Liu Bei was a warlord and the first emperor of the Kingdom of Shu, while Guan Yu was one of his (her? ^_^b) generals. -SakkaOnna

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Dialogue

Tanaka Yoshiki and Akino Matsuri

We found Akino-sensei taking a breather after finishing the first chapter of this series, and Tanaka-sensei in Karuizawa, hard at work on his new novel, and got them both to talk about "Kaze yo, Banri wo Kake yo". Here are their stories, from either side of the finished manuscript...

Tanaka Yoshiki profile

Born in Kumamoto in 1952. He made his debut in 1979 through winning the third Genei-jo newcomers prize. In 1988 his "Legend of the Galactic Heroes" won the Seiun award. He holds a firm place as a bestselling author. His works include "The Heroic Legend of Arslan", "Chinese Military Commander Biographies (Volumes 1 and 2)" and many more.

Akino Matsuri profile

Born on July 7th. Blood type A. Her hobbies are traveling (especially to Italy) and seeing kouengeki plays. Her works include the 15-volume "Reikan Shouhou Kabushiki Gaisha" representative of her mystery series; the 3-volume "As You Like It" the 10-volume "Petshop of Horrors"; and others.



Akino-sensei, I hear you first heard about Hua Mu Lan through this project.

Akino: That's right. Well, I'd heard the name before, but... When did you first discover Hua Mu Lan, Tanaka-sensei?

Tanaka: I think it might have been in University. I was reading a general history of Chinese literature, and in it there was a very simple, one-line introduction of a girl who had dressed as a man and gone to war. I wanted to know more, and when I did some looking around I found the full text, "Mu Lan Ci", in a book called "The Big Dictionary of Chinese Liberal Arts". It isn't as though I was consciously planning to write a novel about her at that point, but the concept did stick with me.

So it's as though there was that first, single paragraph, and everything after came from it.

Tanaka: Yes... Then I felt as though it would be wonderful if I could write about the fifth and sixth century through Hua Mu Lan. When I was "building" the story, I had to think how I could make these legendary characters act without changing any historical facts. Mu Lan fought in a comparatively northern area, and she felt homesick, so I wanted to put her birthplace as far south as I could. When I thought that her father had been a soldier for the Sui, it felt as though I should put her home along the banks of the Dayun River. If it had been there, I thought they would probably have gone to see Yang Di's boat when it went by, and the settings for the scenes came together like links on a chain.

Akino-sensei, this was your first Chinese story. What did you think?

Akino: The characters are Asian, so drawing their features was easy, but those costumes... If I'd just drawn them with a vague "Chinese" image in mind, the styles might have slipped by an amount equivalent to switching between Japan's Heian and Edo eras, so I had to be really careful there. Other than that, drawing the battle scenes, and that line about "One million soldiers"— Those were hard too.

---

*Note: Heian era (794-1185) Edo era (1603-1867) -SakkaOnna

Tanaka: When it's written out like that, it really is just one line, isn't it.

Akino: Certainly. If you wanted to draw one million soldiers, you could do it in a two-page spread. I did think I wanted to draw it on a really large scale, but I was torn between drawing scenes like that and drawing bigger close-ups of the protagonist.

Tanaka: But I'm truly moved that you've drawn all these visual images in this many pages, that the guy who wrote the original work wanted to see. I was really worried about how to recreate the image of the sea of flames surrounding Pingfang in the readers' minds. And Yang Di is incredibly cool-looking. This guy just falls farther and farther into decline, doesn't he.

Akino: I'd previously seen Sumetagi Natsuki's illustration of Yang Di, and thought, he really is that cool.

Tanaka: He is that cool. He was a beautiful, regal, well-built young man. And then he just sort of went to seed.

There are two men who hang around Mu Lan: Tingyu and Shen Guang. Which one is your type, Akino-sensei?

Akino: I probably helped this along by giving Tingyu and Shen Guang contrasting images, but I feel as though Tingyu's character got a bit sillier, and Shen Guang's got cooler. The Tingyu in the book has a considerate, friendly, thoughtful feel to him, and I went and eliminated all of that, although, you know, I don't hate that type of person either. Shen Guang hasn't shown up very much yet, but he's the type that gets admired by everyone around him. As far as male characters go, I like the Shen Guang type best, so no matter what I do, the effort I put into them tends to be different.

The way you put in close-ups is different, yes?

Akino: I was this close to putting flowers in his background. (*laughs*)

Tanaka: I'm glad to hear you say that, it means my digging that character out from the midst of all that research material was worth it. Characters like Mu Lan's family and Tingyu are from the legend, but all other people in the story actually existed. As I was reading through the "Book of Sui" or something similar among all these deaths at age 60 or 50, my eye suddenly caught on one at 29, and when I went to reread that bit, he was so terrific I wondered how he'd ever gotten lost in there in the first place. Even in official history, it's written that he was really incredibly cool, and it's obvious that the person who wrote about him in the first place was a fan.



In Chinese history, are there examples of women other than Mu Lan going to battle?

Tanaka: I've found myself saying this for quite a long time now, but when Japanese people read Chinese history, it's usually "The Annals of the Three Kingdoms", and that's an uncommon work in itself. Looking at the whole flow of Chinese history there is no other work in which so few female characters come into play. If you read works other than "The Annals of the Three Kingdoms", a whole lot of female characters show up. Yes, there are romances that involve them, but most of them are female leaders. What showed through there was something more like the actual circumstances among the common folk, instead of straight-laced Confucianism, when you read stories like those. you start to get this pathetic feeling, as though the reason Confucianism so desperately preached the superiority of men over women was because they knew there was no way the men were going to win this one. so they tried to meet the threat by using Confucianism as an intellectual weapon. (*laughs*)

Even from this first chapter, it feels as though Mu Lan is the one who goes on the offensive, charging straight in, and Tingyu is the one chasing after her.

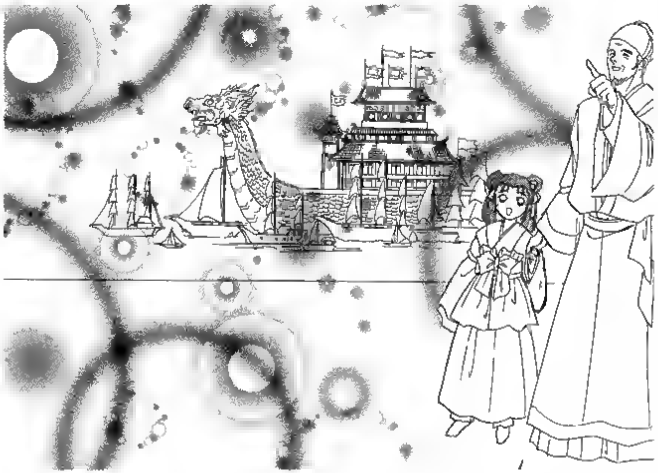
Tanaka: It seems as though when a husband and wife become generals and fight with the enemy for their country's sake, it's usually the wife who advocates positive action. I wonder why that is. (*laughs*)



I imagine there will be readers who will become interested in Mu Lan after reading this manga. Can you suggest any books that would be helpful to those who want to learn more about Mu Lan and this era?

Tanaka: As far as the era is concerned. I think "Commentary on the Sui and Tang" is a good bet. It explains a hundred and more years of history, starting from the unification of the country by the Sui emperor Wen Di. Besides that, there are a lot of very active female characters in it. and female factionists show up too.

Akino: This might be departing from the dialogue a bit, but I think it might make it easier for the readers to understand if you could explain the nicknames, the azana, here ..



Tanaka: Gotcha. An azana was a name given to you as proof that you'd become a full-fledged adult, a different name from the one you received from your parents. So in conversation between full-grown, adult warriors, they'd refer to each other by their azanas. Calling someone by their given name instead of their azana implied that you weren't acknowledging them as an adult, and so were obviously picking a fight with them. So the only people who had a right to call a person by his real name were that person's parents, or the emperor - Anyone in a superior position to that person. If two people were on the same level, they'd always use azanas. Even in Japan we have commonly used names and actual names. For example, in the case of Kinoshita Toukichirou Hideyoshi, "Toukichirou" was enough to get the message across. The full name only shows up in official documents.

I'm sure there will be lots of highlights in every episode. Akino-san, is there anything you'd like to tell the readers?

Akino: I hope that the interesting aspects of Mu Lan and Tingyu's relationship will come through. The first chapter did double-duty as an introduction to the era, so in the following chapters there will be more about the sort of relationships that develop and how they balance each other. I want to dig down deep and really get into drawing Yang Di as well.

Tanaka: I'm really looking forward to seeing it, and that isn't an empty compliment. When I was shown the roughs for the first chapter, I thought, I'm really going to be able to look forward to chapters of this as a reader. I'm very happy to have been able to entrust my "children" to such a good person; please continue to take good care of them.

Happy <belated> Birthday, SakkaOnna!!



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PLEASE SUPPORT AKINO MATSURI AND BUY HER BOOKS!!



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